

EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES HANDBOOK

Chapter 3 - Adjustments to assessment processes and the ratification of progression and awards for taught students in Exceptional Circumstances

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 In declared Exceptional Circumstances or Years (as defined in Chapter 1 of this Handbook) changes to existing assessment, progression and awarding policies and processes may be necessary to ensure, as far as possible, that student outcomes are not adversely impacted. A circumstance would normally only be so judged if it has:

- a. The potential to have a material impact on student academic performance; and/or
- b. It will not be possible to assess student academic performance in the usual manner; and/or
- c. It requires alternative algorithms or evidence to determine whether a student can progress or be awarded.

3.1.2 One or more of the policy options set out in this chapter may be utilised to address the impact of declared Exceptional Circumstances or Years, where adjustments to assessment processes and/or the ratification of taught student progression and awards is required. The policy options are presented as follows:

- a. Policy principles for assessment, progression and awarding
- b. Adjustments to assessments
- c. Adjustments to individual student mitigation
- d. Additional powers of, and actions at, Programme/Departmental Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committees (P/D APACs)
- e. Referrals to, and additional powers of, the University APAC (UAPAC)
- f. Graduation

3.1.3 These policy options apply to taught provision delivered directly by the University and to that delivered through validated partnership arrangements. This includes arrangements for students progressing on from a Partner Institution to a programme of study at the University. Where Faculty or delegated School roles are named, these may need to be substituted for an equivalent role at a Partner Institution.

3.2 Policy Principles for Assessment, Progression and Awarding

3.2.1 Assessment processes must be aligned with teaching and learning opportunities

Within each Faculty (or delegated School), decisions should be made about where adjustments may be necessary to ensure that students are only assessed based on the learning opportunities that have been provided as a result of Exceptional Circumstances. A series of questions are provided below to assist in making decisions about what form of adjustment will be appropriate in which circumstances, and what level of authority and oversight may be required.

3.2.2 There must be consultation and communication with students

At module level, students must be advised of all adjustments being made to assessments as a result of Exceptional Circumstances. Where any adjustments may have a material impact on student experience or outcomes, such as significant changes to the form of assessment students should be consulted where possible.

3.2.3 Overarching institutional timelines for assessment must be maintained

Plans must not be made as a result of Exceptional Circumstances which require alterations to dates for APACs, submission of marks to APACs or for the release of results to students.

3.2.3 Assessments must provide students with an opportunity to demonstrate the extent to which they have met the learning outcomes for the module and the programme

Any adjustments made as a result of Exceptional Circumstances must not compromise academic or professional standards or the credibility of assessment processes.

3.2.4 Adherence to the Assessment, Progression and Awarding Handbook and other requirements of the Teaching Quality Assurance (TQA) Manual, should be maintained

If Exceptional Circumstances arise that necessitate divergence from such requirements, in particular from [Chapter 2](#), Setting and Submission of Assessments, the policy options set out in Section 3.3 below may be appropriate, if not, advice must be sought from [Education, Policy Quality and Standards](#) and, if necessary a Dean's Exception request submitted for consideration by the Dean for Taught Students.

3.2.5 Care must be taken to maintain the balance of assessments overall, where changes are made to the timing of individual assessments, to accommodate rescheduled or alternative teaching and learning activities

Any adjustments made as a result of Exceptional Circumstances must not lead to bunching of deadlines and must provide sufficient time for student

revision/preparation. Adherence to this policy principle will be assessed by the Associate Pro Vice Chancellor for Education (APVCE) (or nominee).

3.2.6 There must be consultation with External Examiners

Wherever possible the External Examiner for the Module and/or Programme should be consulted on adjustments to examination papers or assessment briefs. Where an External Examiner is not able or willing to ratify adjustments, whether prior to or during the P/D APAC, they should note this in their External Examiner's Report and those decisions affected must be referred to the Faculty (or delegated School) APAC (FAPAC) where it should be clearly noted in the minutes

3.2.7 The APVCE (or nominee) may provide final approval without the need for prior External Examiner ratification in the event of short notice changes being required to examination papers or assessment briefs.

All changes to assessments made as a result of Exceptional Circumstances must be recorded and must be reported at the P/D APAC so that the External Examiner and other members are kept fully informed and can ratify the adjustments (see [Chapter 5](#) Chapter 5 of the External Examiners Handbook for further policy on External Examining in Exceptional Years/Circumstances).

3.3 Adjustments to Assessments

3.3.1 When the original planned teaching and learning opportunities, or alternative teaching and learning activities, **have not** been provided on time/ in line with the original schedule of teaching and learning activities

- a. Faculties (or delegated Schools) should undertake a review with a view to identifying those modules and assessments potentially affected by delays to the delivery of teaching and learning opportunities.
- b. In some circumstances, it will be necessary to adjust the scheduling of assessments to ensure that students are fairly assessed on the basis of the teaching and learning opportunities that have been provided. If so, the following policy should be adopted:
 - i. Consideration should be given to whether the timing of individual assessments can be altered, to accommodate the scheduling of rearranged or alternative teaching and learning activity.
 - ii. If the timing of individual assessments is altered to accommodate rescheduled or alternative teaching and learning, the resulting schedule must be fair and

reasonable for all students, considering the overall balance of assessment deadlines.

- iii. Examination periods cannot be rearranged, however, consideration may be given to adjusting the timing of examinations for individual modules that have been impacted, within the overall examination schedule.
- iv. Adjustments to the timing of assessments should be agreed with the Departmental DESE (or nominee), in consultation with the Module Convenor, and reported to the APVCE (or nominee).
- v. Adjustments to the timing of assessments must be recorded and reported at the P/D APAC so that they may be when considering the impact of the circumstances and how effectively they have been mitigated.

3.3.2 When the original planned teaching and learning opportunities have not been provided but alternative teaching and learning activities **have been provided on time/ in line with the original schedule of teaching and learning activities**

- a. Faculties (or delegated Schools) should undertake a review with a view to identifying those modules where alternative teaching and learning opportunities have been substituted for those originally planned and whether or not this has impacted on the mode or content of assessment.
- b. The Module Convenor for any such impacted modules should subsequently review whether the original planned assessment remains valid or requires adjustment.
- c. If it is agreed, in consultation with the Departmental Director of Education and Student Experience (DESE) that no adjustments to the original planned assessment are required, then the assessment may go ahead as originally planned.
- d. If it is agreed, in consultation with the Departmental DESE, that the assessment is deemed to be no longer valid then adjustments should be made in line with the policy options outlined in Section 3.3.5 below

3.3.3 When the original planned, or alternative, teaching and learning opportunities have not been provided at all

- a. Faculties (or delegated Schools) should undertake a review with a view to identifying those modules where it has not been possible to provide either the original planned, or an alternative, teaching and learning opportunities prior to assessment and the impact on the mode or content of assessment.

- b. In such circumstances it is unlikely that that that the original planned assessment will remain valid and adjustments should, therefore, be made.
- c. If it is agreed, in consultation with the Departmental DESE, that the assessment is deemed to be no longer valid then adjustments should be made in line with the policy options outlined in Section 3.3.5 below.

3.3.4 Adjustments that may be considered

- a. Consideration may be given to the **adjusting the content of the assessment** and whether assessment questions and activities can be revised to accommodate those teaching and learning opportunities that have been undertaken as usual, and those that have been disrupted by the Exceptional Circumstances.
 - i. Such changes to assessment questions and activities are the responsibility of the Module Convenor, who must ensure that the revised assessment still enables students to meet the Intended Learning Outcomes for the module.
 - ii. Such changes must be applied across a whole module cohort to ensure parity of assessment experience.
 - iii. Any changes must be agreed in consultation with the Departmental DESE and reported to the APVCE (or nominee) and the P/D APAC.
 - iv. Any changes must be recorded, as this information may be required later in the assessment process, when considering the impact of the Exceptional Circumstances and how effectively this has been mitigated.
 - v. If changes are necessary to an assessment that was set earlier in the Term/Academic Year, then the Faculty (or delegated school) must inform the affected students that the assessment criteria and associated expectations have been amended to align with the teaching and learning opportunities that have already been provided.
- b. Consideration may be given to **redesigning the assessment** to accommodate those teaching and learning opportunities that have not been undertaken as usual, if it is not possible to adjust the content.
 - i. The redesign of assessments is the responsibility of the Module Convenor, who must ensure that the revised form or mode of assessment still enables students to demonstrate the extent to which they have met the Intended Learning Outcomes for the module.

- ii. Such changes must be applied across a whole module cohort to ensure parity of assessment experience.
 - iii. Any changes must be agreed in consultation with the Departmental DESE and reported to the APVCE (or nominee) and the P/D APAC.
 - iv. Any changes must be recorded, as this information may be required later in the assessment process, when considering the impact of the Exceptional Circumstances and how effectively this has been mitigated.
 - v. When the redesign leads to the assessment differing significantly from that previously published to students in the Module Descriptor, students must be informed about the changes and the reason(s) for them. Where timing permits, consent for such changes should be obtained. When timing does not allow student consent to be gained, changes will be permitted without written consent, on the basis that action has been taken in best interests of the students.
- c. Consideration may be given to **adjusting the marking criteria or process**, such as by excluding questions based on teaching and learning opportunities that have not been delivered in the usual way if there has been insufficient time to redesign the assessment between the onset of the Exceptional Circumstances and the completion of the assessment by students or the initial review of marks indicates that this is necessary.
- i. The adjustment of the marking criteria or process is the responsibility of the Module Convenor, in consultation with the Moderator, who must ensure that any adjustments still enable students to demonstrate the extent to which they have met the Intended Learning Outcomes for the module.
 - ii. Such changes must be applied across a whole module cohort to ensure parity of assessment experience.
 - iii. Any changes must be agreed in consultation with the Departmental DESE and reported to the APVCE (or nominee) and the P/D APAC.
 - iv. A sample of the affected examination scripts or coursework must be included in the sample of marked and moderated assessments provided to the External Examiner for review, with an explanation of the adjustments made.
 - v. Any changes must be recorded, as this information may be required later in the assessment process, when considering the impact of the Exceptional Circumstances and how effectively this has been mitigated.

- d. In truly Exceptional Circumstances, and as a last resort, **consideration may be given to amending the Intended Learning Outcomes of the module** to reflect those teaching and learning opportunities that have been provided and associated assessment activities that have been undertaken.
- i. The amendment of Intended Learning Outcomes is the responsibility of the Module Convenor and Programme Director who must collectively ensure that the integrity of the Intended Learning Outcomes at the level of the programme, as set out in the Programme Specification, are maintained.
 - ii. The impact on module and programme level Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements for Intended Learning Outcomes should be considered, if applicable.
 - iii. Such changes must be applied across a whole module cohort to ensure parity of assessment experience.
 - iv. Any changes must be agreed in consultation with the Departmental DESE and reported to the APVCE (or nominee) and the P/D APAC.
 - v. Where there are implications for PSRB accreditation, this should also be reported to the Faculty APAC (FAPAC) and the UAPAC.
 - vi. Students must be informed about the changes and the reason(s) for them, and where possible, give their written consent, before any such changes are approved. However, when timeframes do not allow for student consent to be gained, changes will be permitted without written consent, on the basis that it is in the best interests of the students to do so. Advice and guidance must also be sought from the [Programme Design and Quality Enhancement Team](#) where amendments to modules are required.

3.4 Individual Student Mitigation

- 3.4.1 In designated Exceptional Years the number of evidence-free, self-certified extensions to assessment deadlines and the maximum length of such extensions available to students may be further extended as deemed appropriate by the Dean for Taught Students. This must be effectively communicated to students.
- 3.4.2 Any such changes would represent time-limited exceptions to the policy and process set out in [Chapter 10](#), Mitigation, of Assessment, Progression and Awarding: Taught Programmes Handbook. The number and length of extensions will revert to the pre-

existing policy and process once the Dean for Taught Students has deemed that the Exceptional Year has ended. Additional guidance must be provided for students.

- 3.4.3 Faculty (or delegated School) Mitigation Committees must consider carefully any evidence-based applications for mitigation, for which longer extensions or deferrals may be granted, where there is evidence that the impact of the Exceptional Circumstances has contributed to or exacerbated mitigating circumstances. Any recommendations for further adjustment must be reported to the P/D APAC.

3.5 Additional powers of, and actions at, Programme/Departmental Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committees

- 3.5.1 The primary responsibility of P/D APACs is to consider module marks, make decisions based on individual records of student attainment and to safeguard academic standards for the particular programmes under consideration as outlined in [Chapter 7, Sections 7.3-7.7](#) of the Assessment, Progression and Awarding: Taught Programmes Handbook.
- 3.5.2 During Exceptional Years P/D APACs should aim to ratify progression and awards in accordance with existing processes and deadlines. Where this is not possible, they may utilise the additional powers, or take the further actions, as set out in the following sections. In doing so, academic standards and the integrity of Exeter awards are upheld and the best interests of students considered. Detailed guidance should be provided to support APACs in discharging their roles and responsibilities in such situations.
- 3.5.3 To inform the discharge of their additional powers, or actions, the P/D APAC must be made aware of any cohort-level adjustments made to teaching, learning and assessment opportunities or other activities to mitigate the impact of Exceptional Circumstances on student academic assessment, progression or awarding. This should include any adjustments to recover teaching and learning opportunities, as set out in [Chapter 2](#) of this Handbook and adjustments to assessments as set out in Section 3.3 above.
- 3.5.4 Faculties (or delegated schools) may discuss cohort-level adjustments made, and whether additional powers need to be exercised, or actions taken, to further mitigate the impact of Exceptional Circumstances, at a preparatory meeting of the P/D APAC, although responsibility for finalising and approving module marks, confirming and approving student progression decisions, and making recommendations for awards,

classification and consequences of failure must remain with the full Programme/Discipline APAC. The membership of any preparatory meeting is stipulated in [Chapter 7, Section 7.4.2](#) of the Assessment, Progression and Awarding: Taught Programmes Handbook.

3.5.5 To aid P/D APAC consideration of adjustments to teaching, learning and assessment during preparatory or full meetings, Faculties (or delegated Schools) must flag any modules affected by the Exceptional Circumstances. Where an individual student's mark profile includes such modules, care must be taken during decision making to consider the overall mark profile and the potential impact on progression or awarding, including classification of awards and any adjustments to the mark profiles of individual students must be further flagged to the FAPAC.

3.5.6 The additional powers that may be exercised by P/D APACs, in consultation with External Examiners, during Exceptional Years and Exceptional Circumstances when making decisions in relation to individual students are as follows:

- a. **Setting aside an impacted assessment mark or module mark** when considering progression, classification or condonement.
 - i. Set aside should only be used for small components of assessments, that is components that contribute a small percentage to the overall module mark.
 - ii. The remaining percentage contribution to an overall module mark must be sufficient to ensure that the overall Intended Learning Outcomes have been met.
 - iii. Set aside may not be permissible on certain PSRB accredited programmes of study.
- b. **Substituting a proxy mark** for an affected assessment or module where there is sufficient evidence of a student's performance in other examinations and/or coursework assessments.
 - i. The methodology for determining a proxy mark must be transparent, verifiable and recorded.
 - ii. Where deemed necessary, an institution-wide methodology for determining proxy marks should be developed and approved prior to use.
 - iii. Proxy marks may not be permissible on certain PSRB accredited programmes of study.

- c. **Applying retrospective mitigation** in the form of deferral, that is the provision of a further reassessment opportunity where the mark is not capped.
- d. **Recommending adjustments to degree classifications** for individual students, where their final credit weighted mean is within or very close to the institutionally approved borderline zone.
- e. **Permitting insurance referrals** if usual decision-making on progression or condonement of modules is delayed.
 - i. Where insurance referrals are permitted, such decisions must be clearly recorded and effectively communicated to ensure that these additional assessment opportunities are put in place.
 - ii. Where insurance referrals are permitted, students must be informed of the purpose of these additional assessment opportunities and supported to engage with them if they need to take them up.
- f. **Recommending alternative assessments and/or timing of assessments** if students are unable to complete outstanding module assessment attempts during the usual Referral/Deferral period.
- g. **Permitting conditional progression and increased use of trailing of modules**, subject to agreed criteria and **up to a maximum of 60 credits- worth of modules**, if usual decision-making on progression or referrals is delayed
- h. **Permitting conditional progression and increased use of trailing**, if usual decision-making is delayed on progression or referrals, of **more than the maximum of 60 credits-worth of modules** subject to the following caveats:
 - i. A detailed review of a student's full mark profile is undertaken, including at component level.
 - ii. A detailed assessment of the risk of the student not succeeding in the subsequent academic year is undertaken
 - iii. If the risk is deemed to be too high, the maximum limit of 60 credits should be retained.
 - iv. If the risk is deemed to be minimal, information, advice and guidance must still be provided to enable the student to make an informed decision on whether to accept a conditional progression decision or wait for usual decision-making to be resumed

- v. If the risk is deemed to be minimal, confirmation must be provided that support will be available to the student in the event that they are required to complete reassessment of any trailed modules.
- i. **Offering a student who has a referral or deferral**, which is not addressed by Sections a-h above, and would need to be undertaken in a subsequent academic year thereby preventing their usual progression, **the choice of the two options set out below**. Information, advice and guidance must be provided to enable the student to make an informed decision:
- i. **Completing the referral or deferral assessment(s) at the usual assessment point in the subsequent academic year.**
- This would constitute a Resit Without Attendance (RWA) attempt at an assessment, whether taken as a referral or deferral, as set out in [Chapter 11](#), Consequences of Failure, of the Assessment, Progression and Awarding: Taught Programmes Handbook.
 - RWA students should have access to online learning resources related to the curriculum/assessment pattern of the year in which they were taught, rather than having access to live/current teaching events occurring in-year.
 - Progression should be put on hold pending successful completion of referrals and deferrals and, in alignment with the module completion timeframes set out in [Chapter 2](#), Setting and Submission of Assessments, of the Assessment, Progression and Awarding: Taught Programmes Handbook.
 - Failure to complete a module within the stipulated module completion timeframes, even as a result of Exceptional Circumstances, could necessitate a Repeat Study year, as set out in [Chapter 11](#), Consequences of Failure, of the Assessment, Progression and Awarding: Taught Programmes Handbook.
 - A student may be referred or deferred in multiple assessments and/or modules per stage and with more flexibility during an Exceptional Year or as a result of Exceptional Circumstances, although regard should be had to the assessment load and what is in the best interests of the student.
 - Students should not pay tuition fees (with the exception of fees for sitting any referrals) and would not be eligible for Student Finance.

- Students sitting referrals and/ or deferrals in the subsequent academic year should be classed as registered students.
- Module marks, in relation to any referrals, should be capped at the pass mark and deferrals would receive the full marks awarded.

Note: This would be the default option if a student does not make or is unable to make an informed choice for themselves.

ii. **Undertaking a partial Repeat Study year for the module(s) they have not yet passed.**

- Repeat Study students should be in attendance (RSA) as set out in [Chapter 11](#), Consequences of Failure, of the Assessment, Progression and Awarding: Taught Programmes Handbook.
- RSA students should have access to relevant teaching activities and learning resources as any standard student would.
- RSA students should be assessed on the curriculum/assessment pattern of the current year, rather than that of the year in which they were originally taught.
- Progression should be put on hold pending the successful completion of RSA modules.
- RSA is usually only available once per programme of study, however, where the option to do so is taken up during an Exceptional Year, this should not count against the student should they subsequently require or have already taken a period of repeat study in non-Exceptional Years.
- RSA is usually not permitted where modules have already been passed, unless mandated for PSRBs accredited programmes of study. However, if a student is deemed to have been severely impacted during an Exceptional Year or by Exceptional Circumstances, they may be permitted to repeat passed modules.
- RSA students should be charged tuition fees on a pro-rata credit basis and advise that RSA years will count towards the total number of years for which they are eligible for student finance, which is usually four years.
- RSA students should be fully registered for the term(s) they are repeating and should then be shown as inactive for the rest of the year.

- Marks from repeated modules should not be capped, unless a student was subsequently referred on a repeated module during the RSA year.
- If a student is deemed to have been severely impacted by an Exceptional Year, they may be permitted one further opportunity to be referred in failed elements, following RSA in order to improve their final outcome.

Note: The adjusted approach to RSA outlined above may also be applied to all students undertaking Repeat Study during or after Exceptional Years or Exceptional Circumstances in order to provide enhanced support and to allow them to improve their performance in the subsequent academic year.

3.5.7 In cases where it is deemed that **students studying abroad** have been subject to Exceptional Circumstances that have disrupted their studies, the P/D APAC should take this into consideration when calculating the mark for their year abroad and make recommendations to the Dean for Taught Students, via [Education Policy, Quality and Standards](#), on how the mark(s) for the year abroad should be calculated. Options available include utilising the additional APAC powers and actions for Exceptional Circumstances as detailed in this Chapter, as well as the option to revert to a pass/fail outcome for the study abroad year.

3.5.8 In cases where it is deemed that **students on a year- or stage-long placement** have been subject to Exceptional Circumstances that have disrupted their studies, the P/D APAC should take this into consideration when calculating the placement mark and make recommendations to the Dean for Taught students, via [Education Policy, Quality and Standards](#), on how the placement mark(s) should be calculated. Options available include the APAC powers for exceptional circumstances as detailed in this Chapter, as well as the option to revert to a pass/fail outcome for the placement.

3.5.9 In the event that there has been **no disruption teaching, learning or assessment opportunities** as a result of the Exceptional Circumstances, but **subsequent marking has not been completed on time and/or marks have not been submitted prior to the P/D APAC**, they may also need to draw on the additional powers and actions available to P/D APACs for Exceptional Circumstances as detailed in this Chapter. In exercising such power in this situation, P/D APACs should have regard to the following:

- a. **Where students have completed all required assessments for the current stage of their programme of study**

Their progression to the next stage should not be materially impacted by the absence of marks. In such cases consideration should be given to, for example, conditional progression and increased trailing of credits, up to a maximum of 60 credits (unless a detailed review of a student's grade profile and an assessment of risk suggests that they may be conditionally progressed in excess of 60 credits).

b. **Where students have completed all assessments for the final stage of their programme of study**

Their ability to: a) progress onto another programme of study, whether at the University or elsewhere; or b) to take up an offer of employment that is conditional of the achievement of an Exeter award, should not (if at all possible) be materially impacted by the absence of marks. In such cases interim transcripts and a statement explaining the nature and duration of the Exceptional Circumstances should be made available to the student.

c. **Where students have completed all assessments for an interim stage of their programme**

Their ability to a) progress on to a professional or industrial placement year; or b) progress on to a Study Aboard year, that is conditional on the achievement of a specified stage credit weighted mean, should not (if at all possible) be materially impacted by the absence of marks. In such circumstances, conditions for progression may be waived or varied, subject to the agreement of any third parties, such as partner universities or employers.

3.5.10 The additional powers and actions of P/D APACs outlined in the preceding actions apply to progression and awarding decisions made in respect of individual students. However, if Exceptional Years and Circumstances have an impact on a **whole cohort of students on a module** and create anomalies in mark distributions when compared to previous non-Exceptional Years, the **scaling of module marks** should be considered as a corrective measure and to mitigate such impacts. [Chapter 5, Section 5.8](#) and [Annex G](#) to the Assessment, Progression and Awarding: Taught Programmes Handbook sets out the principles for scaling and how they should be applied. In addition:

- a. When scaling is used during Exceptional Years and Circumstances, the rationale for its use and the modules to which it has been applied should be recorded by the P/D APAC and reported to the FAPAC to enable subsequent review of the application of scaling as a mitigation method.

- b. Where all, or a significant number of, modules have been impacted by the Exceptional Years and Circumstances, the Dean for Taught Students may direct P/D APACs to apply the principle of **positive upward scaling** if a significant downward deviation in mark distribution, compared to when compared to previous non-Exceptional Years is observed.
 - i. P/D APACs should use their academic judgement to apply an appropriate positive adjustment to correct this deviation unless there is a strong rationale for not doing so, such as on the advice of the External Examiner.
 - ii. P/D APACs should seek approval from the Faculty APVCE before deciding not to scale up or to scale down in such circumstances.

3.6 Referrals to, and additional powers of, the University APAC

- 3.6.1 The primary responsibility of the University APAC is to oversee assessment, progression and awarding from an institution-wide quality and standards assurance perspective, as outlined in [Chapter 7, Sections 7.14–7.17](#) of the Assessment, Progression and Awarding: Taught Programmes Handbook. During Exceptional Years it performs an enhanced role.
- 3.6.3 In Exceptional Years, Faculties (or delegated Schools) may need to refer decisions taken at the Faculty (or delegated School) APAC (FAPAC) (see [Chapter 7, Sections 7.10–7.13](#) of the Assessment, Progression and Awarding: Taught Programmes Handbook) to the UAPAC for further consideration and ratification. Decisions should be referred if assessment processes, relating to either an individual candidate or cohorts of students, have been impacted or if the usual operation or constitution of P/D APAC or FAPAC has been affected in any way, such as by a lack of quoracy due to staff absence. Referrals from FAPAC must be made to the University APAC via the submission of written reports in advance of the meeting to [Education, Policy Quality and Standards](#) or oral reports/presentations during the meeting if the time between the FAPAC and the UAPACs does not permit the former.

3.6.4 During Exceptional Years, the UAPAC must convene **in advance of the release of student marks**. Where necessary to facilitate marks release, the business of the University APAC may be divided between two formally constituted meetings.

- a. The first must take place before the release of marks and must provide assurance that Dean's Exceptions and the application of Academic Regulations have been consistently applied, including the provisions of this Handbook; and
- b. The second should take place no later than two weeks from the date of the first and must reflect on good practice, receive requests for policy clarifications and make recommendations for future quality assurance and enhancement, including in the event of Exceptional Circumstances.

3.6.5 Additional meetings of the UAPAC may be convened, as and when required, during Exceptional Years or significant periods of Exceptional Circumstances. The UAPAC has the authority to consider and approve, in consultation with other Governing and Executive bodies of the University, recommendations for additional policies and processes not already covered by this Handbook but which are deemed necessary to mitigate any ongoing impact on assessment, progression and awarding. The UAPAC may also consider and ratify decisions on individual student outcomes, including the granting and classification of award, as a result of the application of additional approved policies. In doing so, academic standards and the integrity of awards must be maintained and the best interests of the student considered.

3.6.6 Further information, advice and guidance with respect to the role and function of the UAPAC in Exceptional Years and under Exceptional Circumstances maybe sought from [Education, Policy Quality and Standards](#).

3.7 Graduation

- 3.7.1 In designated Exceptional Years, or following significant periods of Exceptional Circumstances, the absence of complete mark profiles due to events beyond the control of the University, may mean that a confirmed award result for a graduating cohort cannot be guaranteed within required timescales. Graduation ceremonies may, therefore, be held as an academic achievement/programme of study completion celebration event. This removes the statutory authority to confer a degree award from the graduation ceremonies in such circumstances.
- 3.7.2 If the nature and purpose of graduation ceremonies change in response to Exceptional Years or following significant periods of Exceptional Circumstances, students must be fully informed and in a timely manner of what to expect at the celebration event and its status. Interim transcripts, supported by a letter from the University outlining the Exceptional Circumstances that have led to incomplete grade profiles, must also be issued to final-year students to ensure that they have a record of their achievement/programme of study completion to date.