

## EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES HANDBOOK

### Chapter 2 - Recovery of learning opportunities for taught students in the event of Exceptional Circumstances

#### 2.1 Introduction

2.1.2 In declared Exceptional Circumstances or Years (as defined in Chapter 1 of this Handbook) teaching and other learning opportunities may not be provided or may not be provided in the way originally intended or planned. Steps may, therefore, need to be taken to recover lost learning and ensure that the student academic experience is not adversely impacted.

2.1.2 This chapter sets out policy options that may be utilised by Faculties (or delegated Schools) and Partner Institutions for the provision of alternative teaching and other learning opportunities, where those that were originally intended or planned have been lost or otherwise disrupted by Exceptional Circumstances. The policy options, and associated requirements, are presented as follows:

- a. Policy principles for the recovery of lost learning
- b. Determination and approval of alternative provision
- c. Recording and reporting of lost learning alternative provision

2.1.3 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.

#### 2.2 Policy Principles for the Recovery of Lost Learning

2.2.1 If teaching and other learning opportunities have not been provided as originally intended or planned due to significant but time-limited Exceptional Circumstances, the Faculty (or delegated school) should prioritise the recovery of lost learning on return to normal teaching and learning activities.

For example, for a synchronous lecture which has been cancelled, this may be rescheduled at a later date. However, in the event that a field trip is cancelled, it is

unlikely that the learning opportunity can be replicated in totality and in such cases an alternative provision may be required (see Section 2.3 below).

- 2.2.2 If teaching and other learning opportunities cannot be provided as originally intended or planned due to ongoing Exceptional Circumstances, an initial assessment should be undertaken by the Faculty (or delegated School) as to whether or not the lost learning opportunities and any future learning opportunities can be provided by alternative means.

For example, an in-person lecture could be replaced with an online delivery, whether synchronously or asynchronously.

- 2.2.3 The Faculty (or delegated school) should take all reasonable steps to assure themselves that the lost learning has been / or can be recovered, within an appropriate timescale in order to mitigate the impact on taught students' progress and preparation for assessment

For example, such assurance could be provided by establishing regular review meetings or reports to Faculty Education and Student Experience Committees (FESECs) during the periods of Exceptional Circumstances or the Exceptional Year.

- 2.2.4 When providing learning opportunities through alternative methods, the Faculty (or delegate School) should ensure that this takes place in advance of any assessment related to this learning.

For example, if the learning opportunity is provided later than originally intended or planned, the associated assessment deadline should be adjusted accordingly.

- 2.2.5 If the Faculty (or delegated school) cannot provide the learning opportunities in advance of assessment (see Chapter 3 of this Handbook for alternative assessment policy options) then they should be provided by the end of the academic year, as this may have implications for students' success on subsequent modules and assessments in a later stage of their programme.

For example, in the case of pre-requisite module, steps must be taken to ensure that the students have been able to develop the full range of required knowledge, skills and experiences to embark on the more advanced module in the same subject area.

- 2.2.6 The Faculty (or delegated School) should keep all students affected by lost teaching and learning opportunities fully informed, and in a timely manner, of any action being taken to recover lost or otherwise disrupted learning and any alternative provision being put in place.

For example, via written communications, frequently asked questions (FAQs) or in person briefings, as well as making full use of existing communication channels, such as Student Representatives and Student Voice Partnerships.

## **2.3 Determination and Approval of Alternative Provision**

2.3.1 When determining the most appropriate method of alternative provision for lost or otherwise disrupted teaching and other learning opportunities, consideration must be given to the type of learning activity that has been disrupted. The alternative provision should, as far as possible, provide students with the same or equivalent learning opportunity, taking into account the programme and module level aims and objectives, Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and academic student experience of the provision that was originally intended or planned. For example:

- a. If a synchronous lecture, with limited interaction cannot take place, the provision of lecture notes, reading materials, and/or a recording of the same lecture given previously, alongside an invitation for students to ask follow-up questions during Office Hours, should be sufficient.
- b. If a seminar session cannot take place, in which students would have been able to interact with their peers as well as academic staff, equivalent, alternative opportunities for student-student and student-staff interaction should be provided, whether virtually or face-to-face, synchronously or asynchronously.

2.3.2 When determining the most appropriate method of alternative provision, multiple methods should be considered where necessary to ensure that all lost or otherwise disrupted learning opportunities are recovered as far as practicable. One or more of the options given in the non-exhaustive list below may be considered appropriate:

- a. Organising replacement and/or additional synchronous lectures, tutorials, seminars, or workshops, whether in person or online, to cover the missed module content.
- b. Uploading of asynchronous learning opportunities, such as previous lecture recordings (or equivalent presentations), with accompanying notes and teaching materials, to the Exeter Learning Environment (ELE2).
- c. Uploading of additional learning resources, including reading materials, guided activities and digital resources to ELE2.

- d. Making enhanced use of multimedia and digital learning tools and platforms to replicate interactive elements of synchronous taught sessions.
- e. Provide additional support for students preparing for coursework or examinations by uploading past or sample assignment briefs of examination papers to ELE2 and/or providing additional online formative assessment and feedback opportunities.
- f. Organising of additional one-to-one or group drop-in/Office Hours sessions, whether in person or online, to further explore module content and assessment requirements and provide an opportunity for questions and answers.
- g. Within the parameters of what is permissible in terms of module/programme approval processes, and in consultation with the students, re-design the remainder of the programme or module in terms of the syllabus plan, learning opportunities and/or teaching methods.

2.3.3 Associate Pro Vice-Chancellors for Education (APVCE) (or nominees/equivalents) should determine if the proposed alternative provision is satisfactory in terms of mitigating the impact on the academic student experience of the lost or otherwise disrupted teaching and learning opportunities. Their approval should be received before the proposals are implemented.

2.3.4 Where the Faculty (or delegated School) deems that a learning opportunity cannot be provided satisfactorily by alternative means, proposed options for ensuring that students are not disadvantaged during assessment, progression and awarding should be forwarded via email to [Education, Policy Quality and Standards](#) for consideration and prior approval by the Dean for Taught Students.

## **2.4 Recording and Reporting of Lost Learning and Alternative Provision**

2.4.2 Faculties (or designated Schools) must maintain records, detailing how lost or otherwise disrupted teaching and learning opportunities have been provided by alternative means and by whom it was approved. These records should enable module level tracking over time and associated action planning.

2.4.3 These records must be reported to Programme/Department Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committees (P/D APACs) and should be provided as required to support the consideration and determination of academic appeals or complaints during Exceptional Years or arising from Exceptional Circumstances.

2.4.4 Education Policy, Quality and Standards should maintain records of any exceptions to the policy options for the recovery of teaching and learning opportunities, as approved by the Dean for Taught Students. Such exceptions should be reported to the University APAC.