LANCASTER UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL STUDY CENTRE

EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES POLICY

2026-27

APPLICABLE FROM SEPTEMBER 2026

CONTENTS

INEC 1 DEFINITIONS AND PRINCIPLES 2

INEC 2 TYPES OF EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES 3

INEC 3 EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES PROCEDURES..... 4

INEC 4 EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES COMMITTEE 6

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL STUDY CENTRE EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES POLICY 2026-27

INEC 1 DEFINITIONS AND PRINCIPLES

INEC 1.1 Exceptional circumstances can be considered as such actions or events outside the control of the student which result in any circumstances which are thought reasonably to have caused an individual student:

(a) to fail to complete all the required assessment for a programme or contributing module by a stipulated deadline (e.g. missed exam or assessment deadline);

(b) to complete assessed work to a lesser standard of academic performance than might reasonably have been expected on the basis of performance elsewhere during their study (where the same circumstances have not applied).

INEC 1.2 These circumstances might need to be mitigated in order to arrive at a fair and correct judgement of the student's academic performance. The aim of the exceptional circumstances procedure is to ensure that fairness and academic standards are maintained for all students who endeavour to manage the challenges inherent in academic study.

INEC 1.3 This policy applies to all current students of Lancaster University International Study Centre (the Centre).

INEC 1.4 For the purposes of this policy, 'exceptional circumstances' will mean properly evidenced and approved claims from students that demonstrate good cause as to why their performance and achievements have been adversely affected by means which have not been fully addressed through extension and other available assessment procedures.

INEC 1.5 For the purposes of this policy, 'good cause' will mean illness or other relevant personal circumstances affecting a student and resulting in either the student's failure to attend an assessment, or submit assessment at or by the due time, or otherwise satisfy the requirements of the scheme of assessment appropriate to their programme of studies; or, the student's performance in assessments being negatively impacted (especially when compared with performance in other assessments)**.** Claims of good cause are made by the student via an exceptional circumstances application. Where an incomplete assessment may be the result of good cause, it will be the responsibility of the student concerned to make the circumstances known the Centre and to provide appropriate evidence.

INEC 1.6 A chronic medical condition, for which due allowance has already been made, will not itself be considered a good cause although a short-term exacerbation of such a condition might be so judged. Exceptional circumstances would not normally include reasonable adjustments already made for a disabled student, as defined in an ILSP.

INEC 1.7 'Evidence' will mean a report descriptive of the medical condition or other adverse personal circumstances, provided by the student for consideration. Such a report should include a supporting statement from an appropriate person. Where the report refers to a medical condition of more than five days' duration the report must be completed by an appropriate medical practitioner who would be requested to comment on how the

medical condition concerned would be likely (if this were the case) to have affected the student's ability to prepare for or carry out the assessment(s) in question.

INEC 1.8 Exceptional circumstances are, by definition, *post hoc*; that is they are only considered after a submission deadline.The Centre has agreed arrangements and procedures for deadline extension.

INEC 1.9 The Centre has an Exceptional Circumstances Committee (ECC) whose primary responsibility it is to consider exceptional circumstances applications for its programmes. Exceptional circumstances for which evidence has been provided are reviewed by the Exceptional Circumstances Committee in advance of the examination board. Any such claims would be subject to confirmation by the examining bodies at a later date. By these means the Centre must be able to demonstrate its fair and careful approach in advising examination boards upon their final academic judgement.

INEC 1.10 Exceptional circumstances applications cannot be submitted after the assessment marks have been ratified by the examination board. Claims submitted after ratification cannot be considered by the ECC. Students will need to submit an academic appeal under the Academic Appeals Regulations

INEC 1.11 The ECC is required to meet at least once per annum but might usefully meet on a more frequent basis. The ECC will produce minutes of its meetings to be submitted to the appropriate examination body. Guidance on the management and operation of ECCs can be found in section INEC 4.

INEC 1.12 The Centre will publish a deadline each year for students to submit their exceptional circumstances applications.

INEC 1.13 The Centre will keep a record of exceptional circumstances applications and evidence collated as part of the exceptional circumstances procedures. Records will be retained in line with its standard retention period. Students are advised to keep a copy of any submissions and evidence for their own records.

INEC 2 TYPES OF EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

INEC 2.1 The types of properly evidenced exceptional circumstances (claims of good cause) that will be considered include (but are not limited to):

- serious or significant medical circumstances including both physical and mental health conditions, for example: hospitalisation, incapacitation through injury, illness or mental health crisis;
- close bereavement, for example: the death of a parent/guardian, child, grandparent, sibling, spouse or partner, grandchild or close friend; including participation in funeral and associated rites;
- serious or significant personal circumstances: events that result in a serious impact on a student's ability to engage with academic work during the assessment period in question, for example: family break up; serious illness of a parent/guardian, child, grandparent, sibling, spouse or partner, grandchild or close friend; being in a serious car accident;
- being a victim of serious crime;
- exceptional and unforeseeable transport and travel difficulties beyond the control of the student, for example: major transport incidents;

cancelled flights;
- severe financial problems which could not be anticipated, for example: failure of a bank; withdrawal of funding for a reason outside of the student's control;
- legal proceedings requiring attendance.

INEC 2.2 The types of exceptional circumstances (claims of good cause) that will not be considered include (but are not limited to):

- mild illness such as sore throats, mild colds, headaches, hangovers, minor sports injuries;
- long term illness or disability for which reasonable adjustments have been made;
- circumstances which have already been fully catered for by the granting of a coursework extension unless the situation has drastically changed;
- technical issues (particularly if they could be solved by using a University PC or laptop), computer or printing problems, failure to back up material;
- submitting an incorrect or corrupted file;
- general stress associated with exams or study;
- multiple or competing deadlines;
- examinations on the same or consecutive days;
- poor time management or personal organisation, for example: inability to get to an examination in time; misreading the examination timetable or instructions of assessment deadlines;
- everyday travel and transport issues for example: traffic congestion; missed buses or trains;
- personal travel, unless for an emergency;
- personal circumstances such as constraints arising from paid employment, holidays, house moves, attending weddings, minor financial difficulties, planned health appointments;
- disagreements with a student's landlord or friends;
- an inability to adjust to life away from home;
- problems caused by English not being the student's principal language;
- concerns about political or social unrest in the student's home country which was on going at the time the student left to take up their place at Lancaster University International Study Centre (other than where there has been a sharp deterioration of the situation since departure).

INEC 3 EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES PROCEDURES

INEC 3.1 Where a student believes that exceptional circumstances have prevented them from attending an examination or submitting an assessment or have caused them to complete assessed work to a lesser standard of academic performance than might reasonably have been expected, it is the responsibility of the student concerned to make the circumstances known to the Centre and to provide appropriate evidence.

INEC 3.2 A student who wishes for exceptional circumstances to be considered must notify the Centre within 48 hours after the scheduled examination start time or assessment deadline by submitting an electronic exceptional circumstances application. Notification later than 48 hours after the assessment or after the date at which submission of the work for assessment was due, will not normally be considered unless there is a valid reason that prevented the student from notifying the Centre within this time.

INEC 3.3 All exceptional circumstance applications must come with independent, timely evidence. Requests without evidence will not be considered. Claims can be submitted in advance of evidence becoming available; however, written evidence of the exceptional circumstances must be supplied to the Centre as soon as is practicable and in any event, no later than either:

(a) Three weeks after the examination date or assessment deadline, or

(b) The date of the final Exceptional Circumstances Committee meeting prior to the examination board at which the student's assessments are being considered.

Any evidence submitted after these deadlines will not be accepted.

INEC 3.4 Independent evidence means it must be from a professional and verifiable source not related to the student. Testimonials from friends, family or the student will not be accepted. The Centre must be able to verify that the information provided by the student is correct.

INEC 3.5 The evidence must give direct confirmation of the circumstances from which it is possible to infer their effect on the student's performance.

INEC 3.5 Examples of appropriate supporting evidence includes, but is not limited to:

- medical certificates;
- a letter from a doctor, nurse or other health professional registered with an appropriate accrediting body;
- a letter from the student mental health service (Please note that the student mental health service can only provide evidence if you have had contact with the service prior to the evidence being requested);
- death certificates or confirmation from an independent relevant professional for example a solicitor or an undertaker;
- crime reports;
- accident reports;
- a letter from a solicitor or court;
- evidence of a major transportation incident, or a letter from the relevant transport company confirming the nature of the delay combined with evidence that the circumstances affected the student;
- a letter from a support practitioner, counsellor, religious leader, member of Centre staff or appropriate Lancaster University staff or other professional third party confirming that, in their professional opinion, the circumstances have had a serious impact on the student's ability to engage in assessment activities.

INEC 3.5 Supporting evidence should be submitted in an electronic format by using screen grabs.

INEC 3.6 Evidence must include a date and must cover the time period for the disruption for which the exceptional circumstance are being requested, including the duration of the impact. For example, if the request is for an assessment in the summer to be considered, but evidence from December is provided, it is unlikely this will be accepted.

INEC 3.7 All evidence must be in English. If an original document is in another language, an official translation must be provided. Translation services can be used but must be translated by an independent source. Translations by the student will not be accepted.

INEC 4 EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES COMMITTEE

INEC 4.1 Exceptional circumstances applications (claims of good cause) will be considered by the ECC.

INEC 4.2 The Exceptional Circumstances Committee (ECC) will normally consist of the following members.

(a) A Chair, being an experienced academic member of staff who is a member of the Centre Senior Management team. The Chair for the ECC is recommended not to undertake the role of Chair of the final examination board simultaneously – i.e. within the same academic session or year.

(b) A Secretary, being a Student Services or Academic Support Administrator.

(c) The Student Welfare and Experience Officer.

(d) Between one and four examiners (excluding the Chair and/or Secretary) drawn from the Centre's internal examiners: academic staff members, each with sufficient experience of teaching and assessment to advise upon cases brought before the ECC.

(e) The External Examiners are entitled to attend the ECC and will be briefed on the decisions if unable to attend prior to any examination board.

INEC 4.3 The ECC will meet as required and in accordance with published examination board dates. Dates of ECCs are published at the start of each academic year and will vary in accordance with the academic calendar.

INEC 4.4 Formal minutes will record cases discussed; the ECC's judgement on applicability of exceptional circumstances; and proposed remedy per each case. Minutes will contain such details of particular circumstances as is appropriate.

INEC 4.5 ECC decisions will be brought forward to the examination board to inform final academic judgement. Detailed discussion of circumstances will not be undertaken at the examination board or other meetings of examiners. In considering marks, examination boards will take due cognisance of the recommendations of the ECC. Only in rare circumstances, should an examination board overturn or disregard a decision of the ECC and all such decisions must be reported explicitly to Lancaster University's Classification and Assessment Review Board.

INEC 4.6 In considering exceptional circumstances applications (claims of good cause):

(a) the ECC will consider the information provided in the application including the evidence provided by the student, and any relevant and available material submitted by them for assessment;

(b) the ECC will reach a judgement on whether those circumstances have been detrimental to a student's academic performance;

(c) fairness to the individual student must be balanced with fairness to other students and the integrity of the assessment as a whole.

INEC 4.7 Where exceptional circumstances have previously been addressed in the conduct of assessment – e.g. extra time for examination, extended coursework deadline – the ECC

must consider whether circumstances were sufficiently compensated by that earlier response.

INEC 4.8 The ECC will either accept or not accept an exceptional circumstances application. In the event that the ECC cannot come to an agreement about whether or not to approve an application, the benefit of the doubt will be given to the student and the application will be accepted.

INEC 4.9 Where an application is accepted, the ECC will propose a remedy for consideration by the examination board:

(a) in the event of the student having failed to attend an assessment(s), or having failed to submit assessment(s) at or by the due time, it will be determined whether the failure to attend or submit has been justified by exceptional circumstances;

(b) in the event of the student having attended an assessment(s) or having submitted work for assessment(s), it will be determined whether such work has been negatively impacted (especially when compared with performance in other assessments) by the exceptional circumstances. If such negative impact is established the work affected will normally be deemed not to have been submitted.

INEC 4.10 The ECC may propose a number of actions including (but not limited to):

(a) the opportunity to take a further examination or submit a new assessment as a first sitting (for which therefore there will be no fee and there will be a subsequent resit opportunity if required), or;

(b) in the case of a late submission, the removal of a late penalty, or;

(c) the opportunity to retake modules without attendance as an external sitter after all other reassessment opportunities have been exhausted.

However, it may **not** propose changing the marks obtained for any assessment.

INEC 4.11 Where assessments are affected by exceptional circumstances, the normal timescale for completion of the programme should be adhered to as far as possible. The student will normally be expected to complete their assessment by attending the assessment at a subsequent session or submitting outstanding work for assessment. Consideration should be given to the student's other assessment commitments to ensure that they are not unreasonably burdened. In order to permit such completion:

(a) a special sitting of an assessment may be arranged, or the student will be required to attend for assessment at a scheduled session; and/or

(b) a date for completion of non-examination assessment will be set; as appropriate in the circumstances. In any such event, that sitting or submission will be regarded as the student's first attempt if the assessment missed would itself have been their first attempt.

INEC 4.12 The ECC cannot accept an exceptional circumstances application if:

(a) the ECC agrees that the criteria for exceptional circumstances are not met by the application and independent evidence.

(b) the conditions relating to independent evidence are not met.

(c) the application is not submitted within 48 hours after the scheduled examination start time or assessment deadline and the ECC does not consider there is good reason for this.

(d) an application is submitted after the ratification of the assessment marks in question at an examination board.

INEC 4.13 Where an application is not accepted, and the student has failed to attend an assessment(s) or to submit assessment(s) at or by the due time, the student will be awarded a percentage score of zero for the assessment(s) in question.

INEC 4.14 Where an application is not accepted, and the student has attended an assessment(s) or has submitted work for assessment(s) then their work will be assessed (or penalised) as though no exceptional circumstances application had been received and the student's grade for the assessment and module will be calculated accordingly.

INEC 4.15 If an exceptional circumstances application has been received at the appropriate time but the evidence has not been supplied, the ECC may make a provisional decision if the following conditions are met:

(a) the student has stated the nature of the evidence.

(b) the student has stated why the evidence is not currently available and the ECC accepts the reason(s).

(c) the student has stated when the evidence will be available.

(d) the student is informed that if the evidence submitted does not meet the required standard or does not arrive by the agreed deadline, the application will not be accepted and the provisional decision will be rescinded.

INEC 4.16 Students will normally be informed in writing (by email) of the decision of the ECC within five working days of the decision being made. Where a claim is not accepted or partially not accepted, reasons will be given for the decision.

INEC 4.17 Reasons for the non-acceptance of exceptional circumstances applications can include (but are not limited to):

- the application is not submitted within 48 hours of the scheduled start time of the examination or assessment deadline and a good reason has not been provided or evidenced for failing to do so;
- the exceptional circumstances application is incomplete (NB. If an application is incomplete, Lancaster University International Study Centre will normally prompt the student for the necessary information and/or documents before any decision is made to not accept the application;
- no independent documentary evidence has been provided to support the application (see section INEC 3)
- the application is a direct re-submission of a previously rejected application;
- the timing of the circumstances cited would not have adversely affected the assessment(s);
- the nature of the circumstances cited is not over and above the normal difficulties experienced in life;

- sufficient adjustment has already been made for the same circumstances or the evidence has already been used to support adjustment for the same assessment(s) and no new evidence has been provided;
- the circumstances cited relate to a disability for which reasonable adjustments have been made but which the student has not engaged with to a reasonable extent;
- the application is submitted after the assessment marks have been ratified by the examination board. Claims submitted after ratification cannot be considered by the ECC. Students will need to submit an academic appeal under the Academic Appeals regulations.