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Adverse circumstances policy



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IB mission statement

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.



IB learner profile

The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world.

As IB learners we strive to be:

INQUIRERS

We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn with enthusiasm and sustain our love of learning throughout life.

KNOWLEDGEABLE

We develop and use conceptual understanding, exploring knowledge across a range of disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance.

THINKERS

We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyse and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions.

COMMUNICATORS

We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups.

PRINCIPLED

We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and justice, and with respect for the dignity and rights of people everywhere. We take responsibility for our actions and their consequences.

OPEN-MINDED

We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from the experience.

CARING

We show empathy, compassion and respect. We have a commitment to service, and we act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world around us.

RISK-TAKERS

We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and innovative strategies. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change.

BALANCED

We understand the importance of balancing different aspects of our lives—intellectual, physical, and emotional—to achieve well-being for ourselves and others. We recognize our interdependence with other people and with the world in which we live.

REFLECTIVE

We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our learning and personal development.

The IB learner profile represents 10 attributes valued by IB World Schools. We believe these attributes, and others like them, can help individuals and groups become responsible members of local, national and global communities.

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Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this publication is to explain the approach that the International Baccalaureate (IB) will take to mitigate the impact of adverse circumstances on a student.

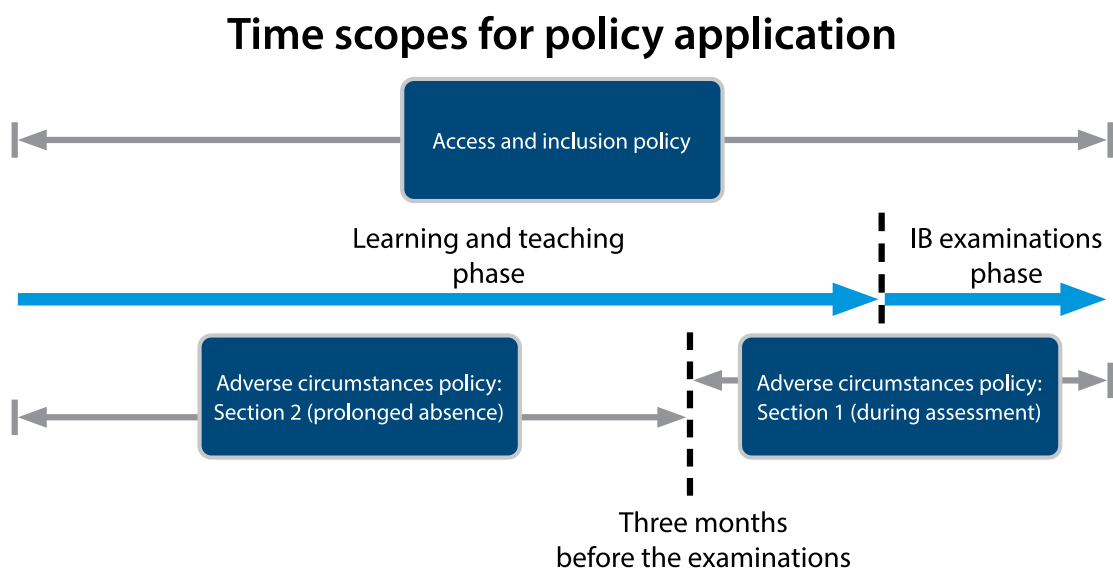
It is expected that it will give IB educators an understanding and appreciation of the principles behind the IB's approach as well as support them in putting the principles into practice in a variety of situations.

Adverse circumstances can occur at any time during the study of IB programmes. This policy considers the timeline of occurrence of a potential adverse circumstance during the learning journey of the student and divides it into the following.

1. **Adverse circumstances during assessment.** These are situations that affect a student and have a bearing on their performance in IB assessments. The onset or occurrence of these situations is either during the examination(s), or up to three months before the written examinations in May/November.
2. **Adverse circumstances that cause prolonged absence from learning and teaching.** These are situations where a student or group of students, due to difficult and unforeseen situations, has had a prolonged absence from school and have also not been able to engage with any alternate modes for their learning and teaching for an extended period.

Figure 1

The IB access and inclusion policy, and the adverse circumstances policy outlined in this document, may apply at different times during an IB student's education



Scope of the policy

This policy applies to and should be read by:

- all IB World School leadership, teachers and administrators
- all IB World School members of staff responsible for the delivery of IB examinations
- parents and legal guardians of students whose learning and teaching has been disrupted due to adverse circumstances
- parents and legal guardians of students going through assessment.

Additionally, it is recommended that students are informed of this policy.

1. Adverse circumstances

1.1 What are adverse circumstances during assessment?

Adverse circumstances during assessment are situations that have their onset or occurrence during the examination(s) or up to three months before the written examinations in May/November, are beyond the control of a student and/or the school and affect a student and have a bearing on their performance in IB assessments.

Note: “during the examination” refers to the 24-hour period before the start of the scheduled written examination and throughout the written examination itself.

1.2 What does not constitute adverse circumstances during assessment?

- Administrative errors, shortcomings or constraints on the part of the school. For example, the school administering the wrong examination papers or data booklets, malfunctioning or non-availability of calculators and/or IT equipment, frequent changes of a subject teacher, a shortage of teachers, teaching resources or facilities, the school not applying the authorized access arrangements for a student, failure to or incorrectly communicating errata details before an examination, timing or scheduling errors.
- Insufficient teaching time, including when caused by natural disasters that occur up to three months before the written examinations in May/November, absence of a teacher, including if caused by sudden illness or death, staff participation in industrial action.
- Errors or shortcomings on the part of the student. For example, a student misreading the examination timetable, failing to attend an examination or misreading the instructions/questions, inadequate preparation for assessments, including if the student has started the programme late in the academic year.
- Long-term medical, physical or learning challenges, temporary medical challenges and circumstances that may have an impact on the student but have their onset or occurrence earlier than three months before the written examinations in May/November.
- Minor disturbances during an examination. For example, another student leaving the room because of illness, or people talking outside the examination room.

1.3 What if a circumstance occurs more than three months before the written examination?

If a circumstance(s) occurs more than three months before the written examination, requests for inclusive access arrangements must be submitted under the access and inclusion policy and procedures. For further details, please refer to the IB publication *Access and inclusion policy* and *Assessment procedures* publications (available for each programme and updated annually).

If a circumstance(s) causes prolonged absence from learning and teaching, Section 2 of this policy will be applicable.

1.4 Which students would be eligible for mitigation measures?

Adverse circumstances may impact an individual student or multiple students, where the same circumstance affects a specific group of students or the entire cohort.

- Individual students: Adverse circumstances such as medical issues, injuries, mental health difficulties and bereavement can impact individual students.
- Multiple students: Adverse circumstances such as natural disasters, civil unrest and the bereavement of a classmate (affecting the closest peers) can impact multiple students.

The mitigation measures stated in this policy can be applied to both individual students as well as multiple students. To be eligible for mitigation measures, students must:

- have completed the course of study

and

- be affected by an adverse circumstance that would have an impact on their assessments during the written examination(s) or during the three-month period before the written examinations.

In addition, mitigation measures will only apply to individual students who have communicated to the school about their adverse circumstance before or during the examination(s). The school may receive this communication from the student or from the parents or legal guardians.

1.5 Principles

- Every student who experiences an adverse circumstance must be given a fair chance in their IB assessments. The goal is to remove or reduce their disadvantage without giving them any undue advantage.
- The purpose of this policy is to be consistent and use the same standards for all students when applying mitigation measures to manage the impact of adverse circumstances.
- In applying these measures, the IB will select the mitigation that has the least impact on the validity (comparability) of the assessment.

1.6 What actions can the IB take?

Mitigation measures are the actions available to the IB to support students who are impacted due to adverse circumstances.

The available mitigation measures are as follows.

- Authorization of inclusive access arrangements
- Deferral of external assessment to a next or future examination session
- Extensions to IB submission deadlines
- Assessment rescheduling
- An alternative venue
- Missing mark procedure for incomplete assessment

The missing mark procedure (see [Section 2.4](#)) for incomplete assessment can only be applied for the impact of adverse circumstances that occur during the written examination (inclusive of the 24-hour period before the start of the scheduled examination and throughout the examination itself).

Inclusive access arrangements, deferral of external assessment, rescheduling and alternative venues can also be applied where the impact of the adverse circumstance has occurred up to three months before the start of the written examinations in May/November.

1.7 Responsibilities of the school

- To support students through any difficult circumstance—offering the flexibility of learning and teaching support, including counselling when required—to mitigate the impact on their education. Many adverse situations are best managed by timely appropriate responsive and empathetic support from the student’s school.
- To ensure that school leadership, administration, teachers, parents, legal guardians and students understand the principles of the adverse circumstances policy and the mitigation measures available under this policy.
- To ensure that the policy is followed, especially where the authorization from the IB is retrospective as the onus in these cases would wholly lie with the school.
- To ensure that parents, legal guardians and students understand that they must declare the adverse circumstance before or during the examination(s) for mitigation measures to be applicable.
- In selecting the mitigation measures to support a student, the school must consider both the unique situation of the student as well as the validity of IB assessments. This means that the school must balance supporting the student using the mitigation measures that have the least impact on the assessments.
- Where the student is affected by an adverse circumstance that is unrelated to them, such as technological or administration issues, and where the school is responsible for these circumstances, the school must resolve the issues.

Note that the IB will take no responsibility in such cases and the mitigation measures listed in this policy will not be applied. The option of a retake will be available to students at a fee and the school should follow the usual procedure stated in IB *Assessment procedures* to register students for a retake session.

- Before submitting a request with supporting medical documentation to the IB, the school must obtain consent from the student if they are at the age of consent in their country, or otherwise from the student’s parents or legal guardians.

1.8 Responsibilities of the IB

- To ensure consistency and fairness to all students when authorizing mitigation measures to manage the impact of adverse circumstances.
- Where the IB is responsible for technological or administrative issues, all reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that the student is not disadvantaged by the circumstances. The IB will use discretion and the mitigation measures listed in this policy to achieve this. In some instances, ultimately the only way to issue a grade that is a fair reflection of the student’s performance may be to allow them to retake the assessment.

2. Mitigation measures

2.1 Access arrangements for adverse circumstances during assessment

Access arrangements should be the first method of support for most students impacted by adverse circumstances during assessment. Access arrangements will normally be authorized when a student has sustained an injury or has other medical or psychological difficulties up to three months before the start of the examinations, and their ability to complete their examinations in the usual way is affected.

The access arrangements available as mitigation measures are:

- additional time (25%)
- word processor
- scribe or reader
- supervised rest breaks
- separate room
- prompter.

Of these, supervised rest breaks, separate room and the use of a prompter do not need authorization from the IB.

Each student is unique and will have their preference for which arrangement(s) will be most supportive. The school must communicate with the student to agree on the most appropriate arrangement based on this policy.

If the occurrence of the injury or condition is more than three months before the written examinations, requests for inclusive access arrangements must be submitted under the access and inclusion policy and procedures. For further details, please refer to the IB publication *Access and inclusion policy* and *Assessment procedures* publications (available for each programme and updated annually).

2.1.1 Additional time (25%)

Additional time (25%) can be available to students where the impact of the adverse circumstance is such that they would be disadvantaged under the standard examination time conditions. Impact on the student can be physical (due to medical reasons), emotional (such as distress) and/or cognitive (such as difficulty in concentration).

A request for authorization should be made to the IB.

2.1.2 Word processor

Word processors can be made available to students where the impact of the adverse circumstance is such that they would be disadvantaged if they had to produce handwritten responses. The most common cause is physical injury or other medical conditions. However, the use of a word processor can also be appropriate support where the impact of the adverse circumstance is emotional or cognitive.

A student may also require additional time (25%) as well as a word processor because they are only able to use one hand or type very slowly due to injury.

A request for authorization should be made to the IB.

2.1.3 Scribe or reader

Access to a scribe or reader can be made available to students where the impact of the adverse circumstance is such that they are not able to provide handwritten responses or read the examination paper clearly. This is usually due to physical injuries or other medical conditions. In addition, access to a reader may be supportive in instances where the student is emotionally impacted and would find it difficult to concentrate on the examination.

Since working with a scribe may be a new way of working for a student, they may also need additional time (25%).

A request for authorization should be made to the IB.

2.1.4 Supervised rest breaks

A student may be permitted supervised rest breaks where the amount of break time permitted is not counted towards the duration of the student's examination. Rest breaks must be supervised to ensure that the security of the examination is maintained. There must be no communication with, or disturbance to, other students. The amount of rest time and number of breaks permitted must be predetermined and will depend on the student's circumstances—10 minutes per hour is the general recommendation. During a rest break, the student is not permitted to read, respond to the examination questions or write notes of any kind. Students may be allowed to leave the room for all or part of the rest periods but must be supervised.

This arrangement does not require authorization from the IB.

2.1.5 Separate room

The impact of the adverse circumstance on the student may be such that they would benefit from sitting the examination in a separate room, rather than with the entire cohort. The school can plan this and all regulations governing the conduct of IB examinations must be observed. The student must be kept under the constant supervision of an invigilator.

This arrangement does not require authorization from the IB.

2.1.6 Prompter

A prompter can be made available for a student who may lose their focus from the examination due to the impact of the adverse circumstance. The role of the prompter is to draw the student's attention back to the examination. After making a prior agreement with the student, the prompter would support the student to bring their attention back to the examination by tapping on the desk, or even on the shoulder, when the student loses their focus, or at specified intervals of time (such as every 20 minutes) as agreed. The prompter must not communicate verbally with the student unless they are also the designated reader or scribe, which is permissible.

The coordinator or invigilator may act as a prompter, but the examination must be conducted according to IB regulations. In all cases, the prompter may only prompt the student and not provide any form of assistance.

This arrangement does not require authorization from the IB.

2.2 Deferral of external assessment

Deferral to the next or future examination session can be made when a student, or group of students, has missed one or more assessment components due to an adverse circumstance.

When a student has been impacted by adverse circumstances and has communicated their situation to the school, they can defer one or more subjects of their external assessment to the next or future session.

Deferral can take place:

- during the three-month period before the written examination **Note:** It is possible to defer the examination(s) before this three-month period and this would be managed through the access and inclusion process, rather than the adverse circumstances process.

2. Mitigation measures

- immediately before the student enters the examination room
- part-way through or after completing the examination.

In the event of a deferral in a subject, if a student has submitted the internal assessment (IA), these marks can be carried forward to a future session, unless there is a change to the course and/or a new curriculum.

In these situations, the registration and the fees for the subject(s) concerned will be carried forward and the deferred session will not count as one of the available three that the student must complete to be awarded a diploma.

Where there is an impact of an adverse circumstance during the three months before the written examination, and the student would like to defer the examinations to the next or future session, the school must send a request for deferral to the IB.

If the decision to defer has been made in the examination room part-way through or after completing the examination, the following will apply.

- The student must give written consent to the school to void the examination that they have attempted.
- Once the decision to defer has been made it cannot be revoked.
- The student must be marked as absent for the examination.
- The school must securely dispose of any work completed in the examination room.

Examination scripts must not be sent to the scanning centre. If any examination is sent to the scanning centre, then it will be marked and deferral will not apply. This will overrule the written consent given by the student to void the examination.

A deferral will be void if a student withdraws their registration from IB assessment.

2.3 Extensions to IB submission deadlines

Where a student is affected by an adverse circumstance prior to the submission of early components, for example, the extended essay (EE), theory of knowledge (TOK) essay or IA/other sample work, the IB may authorize an extension to the submission deadline. An extension must be formally authorized by the IB and is normally for a period of two weeks. The IB will consider a longer extension on a case-by-case basis if the adverse circumstance is of a very challenging nature.

2.4 Missing mark procedure for incomplete assessment

If a student, or group of students, has been unable to complete a written examination owing to adverse circumstances, the IB may estimate a mark for the missing examination based on available evidence.

A missing mark is an estimate of how well the student would have done based on their performance in the completed components and the average of all other students. As it is an average, overestimations or underestimations will occur. Therefore, it should only be used as a last resort when there is no other way to provide a mark for the student. It is always better to have the student's best attempt at completing the assessment while applying the other mitigation measures to deal with the adverse situation.

For these reasons, the missing mark procedure is only available for adverse circumstances:

- that impact a student during an examination (inclusive of the 24-hour period before the start of the scheduled examination and throughout the examination itself)
- where deferral, rescheduling and alternative venues are not viable options and the justification for this is provided to the IB
- where access arrangements are not the appropriate mitigation measures to support the student
- where the missing mark procedure is requested for only one subject (for requests for more than one subject, the IB will decide on a case-by-case basis if the missing mark procedure is an appropriate mitigation measure because it means replacing a fair assessment of large amounts of student work

with a statistical average. As a result, this procedure is unlikely to offer a fair summary of the student's performance)

- where there is only a single component in the assessment model: for example, in the Middle Years Programme (MYP).

In the situation of a single component, the IB cannot use the missing mark procedure but will consider using a missing grade procedure: see "Approach to missing grades" in Section C of *Assessment principles and practices—Quality assessments in a digital age*. To estimate the grade meaningfully, the IB would require assessments to be completed in a sufficient number of subjects.

To be eligible for a missing mark, the student must have completed a required amount of assessment as set out in the *Assessment procedures* of the relevant programme.

The missing mark procedure will not apply to IA or any subjects where the assessment does not include a written examination (for example, in some arts subjects in the Diploma Programme (DP)). In these instances, where required, the IB would consider authorizing extensions to deadlines.

As the missing mark procedure is not a pre-examination mitigation tool, it can only be considered during the 24-hour period prior to the start of the written examination and under no circumstances should it be planned before this. The IB will consider applying the missing mark procedure on a case-by-case basis.

2.5 Rescheduling

To support a student facing adverse circumstances, an examination can be rescheduled. The rescheduled examination time must be within 24 hours after the original scheduled examination date/time. If the situation is that the student can sit for rescheduled examinations, this must be the mitigation tool that is used. The missing mark procedure will **not** be applied in situations where rescheduling could have been applied but was not considered.

For most students with adverse circumstances, emergency rescheduling during the 24-hour period before the scheduled examination date/time would be applicable. For individual students, the most likely adverse circumstance that necessitates rescheduling an examination would be medical or psychological conditions. For groups of students, emergency rescheduling may be necessary for reasons such as natural disasters. In some instances, rescheduling for groups of students, such as the entire cohort, may be required outside the emergency 24-hour window before the examination. For example, if there is an announcement of a state-wide shutdown on the day of the examination that would affect transport and safety, authorization from the IB to reschedule the examination can be sought in advance.

Rescheduling examinations must be authorized by the IB. However, if there is an adverse circumstance that is impacting a student and emergency rescheduling must be put in place, and if the school is unable to contact the IB, the school can go ahead with the rescheduling and then inform the IB. In all these instances, the IB will retrospectively review the rescheduling request. It is the school's responsibility to follow the IB policy on rescheduling and adverse circumstances. If it is found that the school has not followed policy and guidelines when putting rescheduling in place, the IB can decide the student's work is inadmissible and give zero marks for any affected components.

Schools must refer to and follow the guidance in the *Rescheduling of IB examinations guide* (available on the Programme Resource Centre).

2.6 Alternative venue

An alternative venue in which to conduct the examination can be put in place to support students facing adverse circumstances. If the situation is such that the student(s) can sit for the examination in an alternative venue, this must be the mitigation measure that is used. The missing mark procedure will **not** be applied in situations where the alternative venue could have been used but was not considered.

For individual students, the most likely adverse circumstance that necessitates an alternative venue would be medical conditions where the student is unable to sit for the examinations in school but is able to do so in their home or hospital. For a group of students, an alternative venue may be put in place in instances

2. Mitigation measures

such as a shutdown of the school premises and where arrangements are made for the students to sit for the examination in another school.

Alternative venue usage must be authorized by the IB. Nevertheless, if there is an adverse circumstance that impacts a student, an alternative venue for the examination must be put in place, and if the school is unable to contact the IB, the school can go ahead with the alternative venue and then inform the IB. In all these instances, the IB will retrospectively review the request to conduct the examination in an alternative venue. It is the school's responsibility to follow the IB policy when planning and implementing an alternative venue for the examination. If it is found that the school has not followed policy and guidelines when putting an alternative venue in place, then the IB can decide the student's work is inadmissible and give zero marks for any affected components.

Alternative venues are covered under the "Examinations" section of the *Assessment procedures* publication. For further details, refer to the *Assessment procedures* publication for the relevant programme.

3. Submitting requests to the IB

3.1 IB authorization of requests

3.1.1 For adverse circumstances that have occurred more than two weeks but fewer than three months before written examinations

Where the adverse circumstance has occurred more than two weeks but fewer than three months before the written examination, schools can put in place mitigation measures only after authorization of the request by the IB. Requests can only be made three months before the written examination—not before 1 February for the May examination session and not before 1 August for the November examination session. All requests must include supporting documentation (see [Section 3.2](#)).

3.1.2 For adverse circumstances that have occurred up to two weeks before and during written examinations

Note: “during the examination” refers to the 24-hour period before the start of the scheduled written examination and throughout the examination itself.

Where the adverse circumstance has occurred within the two weeks before the examination or during the examination, and where there is insufficient time to gather the supporting documentation (see [Section 3.2](#)) to submit requests to the IB, schools can put in place mitigation measures as per this policy. The IB will use discretion and retroactively authorize mitigation measures implemented by the school that are in line with this policy. All requests to the IB must be submitted within 10 days after the student’s last written examination. Schools are advised that the IB will only authorize a missing mark procedure where the school has justified that other mitigation measures were not a viable option.

3.1.3 For retake, deferred and anticipated students

All requests for adverse circumstances are session-specific because the period in which adverse circumstances would be considered is three months before the written examinations. For all retake, deferred and anticipated students, schools must submit new requests. The new request(s) should meet all the criteria as per this policy.

3.2 Supporting evidence

All requests for mitigation measures to be applied must include supporting evidence, such as medical documentation or a statement from the school, parents or legal guardians. All supporting documentation must be accompanied by a translation into English, French or Spanish, if it is not already written in one of these IB working languages. Unofficial translations are acceptable along with the original documents.

3.2.1 Medical documentation

Medical documentation must be dated fewer than three months before the start of the written examinations and indicate the time of onset or occurrence of the medical condition.

The IB reserves the right to query or reject a report if it considers that the signatory (or signatories) may not be suitably qualified to undertake the evaluation and identification. It is not permitted for a relative of the student to write or be involved in the writing of the report.

3.2.2 Statement from the school, parents or legal guardians

If the adverse circumstance that has impacted the student is a bereavement or difficult home/family circumstances, a statement from the school, parents or legal guardians about the situation must be submitted as supporting evidence. This statement should include when the bereavement or difficult home/family circumstances occurred and how the student has been impacted.

In addition, if the statement is made by the school, it should include details about who informed the school about the adverse circumstance.

3.2.3 Misuse of policy or maladministration in submitting requests

It is a school's responsibility to follow the conditions and requirements stated in this policy when submitting requests to the IB. Any request for adverse circumstances that does not follow this policy will not be authorized by the IB and may be treated as maladministration.

If a request is submitted during the three-month period before the written examinations and is rejected by the IB as it does not follow the policy, schools are expected to follow standard assessment conditions for the student.

Note: The IB will not process any requests for adverse circumstances that have been submitted after the issue of results.

3.3 Procedure to submit requests

For details about the form to be submitted to the IB to apply for mitigation measures and how to submit requests, please refer to the *Assessment procedures* publication for the relevant programme.

4. The adverse circumstances policy in action during assessment

Examples

The following are examples of the policy in action. They are drawn from the circumstances that most often affect individuals or groups of students. The aim in reproducing them is to give schools guidance on what may be considered as adverse circumstances during assessment and how the mitigation tools may be applied for students.

4.1—A student is diagnosed with a medical condition two months before the examination and the side effects of the medication affect cognitive processing. The school submits an adverse circumstance request to the IB for additional time (25%). As the impact of the adverse circumstance would affect the student's ability to respond under standard timed conditions, the IB authorizes additional time (25%).

4.2—A day before the examination, a student is in an accident and injures their dominant hand. The student would not be able to write their responses by hand, and even with a word processor their typing would be very slow. The school puts in place additional time (25%) and a word processor for the examination. All the supporting documentation is submitted to the IB and retroactively approved.

4.3—A student sustains a back injury a month before the examination. While the pain related to the injury has eased, the student still needs to shift posture and take a break from sitting every half hour. The student would benefit from planned rest breaks and the school puts this in place for the examination. IB approval is not required for this arrangement.

4.4—A student is disturbed due to a recent bereavement in the family and wishes to have a quiet, separate space to write their examinations. The school puts this arrangement in place and follows the regulations for the conduct of IB examinations. IB approval is not required for this arrangement.

4.5—A student is emotionally disturbed due to difficult family circumstances and feels that rest breaks during the examination, where they can step out of the examination room and have a drink, may help them sit through the duration of the examination. The school puts this in place and IB approval is not required for this arrangement.

4.6—A student develops anxiety and insomnia due to examination stress a few days before the examination. The student would like to be supported by a prompter and feels it would help with their "drifting away" and losing focus on the examination. The school puts this in place and IB approval is not required for this arrangement.

4.7—A student injures their dominant hand two months before the written examinations and it is to be in a cast for the duration of their examinations. They would like to use a scribe for the examinations. A request is submitted to the IB and it is approved.

4.8—A student with anxiety has a sudden increase of symptoms 10 days before the examinations. The student feels less anxious if supported by a reader because this helps them to calm down and focus better. The student is also supported with additional time (25%) because their symptoms affect their focus on the examination. These arrangements are put in place for the examinations. All the supporting documentation is submitted to the IB and retroactively approved.

4.9—A student suffers a bereavement of a close family relative and is in shock. After a conversation with the student and their parents or legal guardians, it is decided that the best approach to take is to defer the examinations to the next session, when the student would be in a better state of mind. A request for deferral is sent to the IB and approved.

4.10—A student with anxiety develops panic attacks on the morning before the examination. They find it very hard to calm down and feel it would be impossible to come into school and sit the examination, even in a separate room. The school applies for permission from the IB to reschedule the examination at an

4. The adverse circumstances policy in action during assessment

alternative venue. The examination is rescheduled for the afternoon and the student takes the examination at home with an invigilator from school overseeing it. All supporting documentation is sent to the IB and retroactively approved.

4.11—A student suffers a bereavement two and a half months before the examination and is emotionally impacted. An extension to coursework deadlines would support the student. The school submits a request to the IB and this is approved.

4.12—A student is in an accident on the way to their examination and must be attended to by a doctor. The student is unable to attend the examination and is not in a fit condition to sit the examination within the rescheduling window of 24 hours. Under these circumstances, the school is unable to put in place any of the available mitigation measures. The school also justifies why deferral to the next or future session is not a viable option for this student. The IB authorizes applying the missing mark procedure for the examination for which the student was absent.

4.13—A student is hospitalized for a month before the examination, which impacts their revision time. The medications that they have to take for a three-month period have side effects of loss of concentration and negatively affecting energy levels. The student thought they would manage to take the examination in a separate room. However, halfway through, the student decides to void the examination because they are tired, unable to concentrate on the paper, and feel their preparation was not to their desired level. They communicate their wish to defer the examination that they had attempted to the next session. The school obtains a written consent from the student, securely disposes of the student's examination answer booklet and marks the student as absent for the examination. The school then sends a report to the IB and the request for deferral of the examination to the next session is authorized.

4.14—There are severe floods and the city where a school is located is shut down for two days. The school is unable to reschedule paper 1 examinations of a subject that was to take place on the first day of the shutdown but can reschedule the paper 2 examinations of the same subject that were due on the second day. A request is made and the IB applies the missing mark procedure for the entire cohort for the examination that took place on the first day because there was no other reasonable mitigation measure that the school could apply.

5. Adverse circumstances that cause prolonged absence from learning and teaching

5.1 What are adverse circumstances that cause prolonged absence from learning and teaching?

Students may be absent from school for several reasons. While some may be absent for a continuous period, others may have shorter, recurrent bouts of absence that can be equally disruptive to their education.

At an individual level, student illness may be due to a physical or medical condition, mental health difficulties and emotional disturbances, or the exacerbation of existing long-term challenges. These are usually a primary cause of chronic absence from school. Family circumstances and stressful situations, such as bereavement, prolonged illness of a family member, separations, or disputes in the family, may be other factors that can cause students to be absent from school.

At a group level, students may face disruption to their learning and teaching where circumstances and situations affect the entire school or cohort. Examples of such situations are school closures due to civil unrest, or natural disasters that cause damage to the school buildings.

This policy describes prolonged absence from learning and teaching where a student or group of students has not been able to engage with their learning and teaching for an extended period, defined as 30 consecutive or non-consecutive calendar days within a six-month period, due to difficult and unforeseen situations.

This policy applies where a student is unable to participate in learning and teaching for the period mentioned above. This includes not only physical absence from school but also not being able to engage with all the work sent home from school, being unable to connect remotely or only occasionally able to connect to daily lessons remotely (defined as fewer than three hours per full school day). Nonetheless, there may be subjects where the learning and teaching cannot be provided remotely, such as group work in the arts.

5.2 What does not constitute adverse circumstances that cause prolonged absence from learning and teaching?

- Circumstances where the disruption is a choice of the parents or legal guardians for travel or other purposes, where absence is not in line with any existing internal school policy on attendance.
- Circumstances where the school can provide the necessary support through remote learning and teaching and extra tuition to the student.
- Situations where a school has not provided support to students for their prolonged absence from school.
- Situations where there has been systematic failure in teaching in the school. For example, where there has been no subject teacher available for a length of time or where the school has not been able to provide equipment required for learning and teaching.
- Situations where the student participates and engages in all their learning and teaching but faces barriers in doing this. Access arrangements can and should be applied to reduce or remove barriers, in accordance with the principles of the access and inclusion policy.

- Situations where a student is impacted by an adverse circumstance during the IB examinations. Support for this is detailed in [Section 1](#) of this publication.

5.3 Which students would be eligible for mitigation measures?

Any student or group of students whose learning and teaching has been disrupted for an extended period (defined as 30 consecutive or non-consecutive calendar days within a 6-month period) from the start of their IB programme up to 3 months before their written examinations, due to difficult, unforeseen situations.

5.4 Principles

- The best outcome for the student is to complete their study. Even if this delays their progression to future opportunities, pushing forward without enough time to learn will disadvantage them.
- The school is responsible for addressing situations and supporting students when there have been school absences for individual students or a group of students due to difficult, unforeseen situations.
- The IB programmes are designed around students' learning and there is no easy way to compensate for gaps in their development, nor can the IB estimate where students would have been in their learning journey if the disruption had not happened.
- Students who require access arrangements to participate and engage in learning and teaching must be supported through the access and inclusion policy.
- The IB cannot offer grades to a student without completion of their IB assessments. As such, the school's predicted grades, or any other non-examination option, are not routes that the IB can offer to mitigate for disruption to learning and teaching.
- If students are impacted by adverse circumstances at the time of assessment (including three months before the written examinations), then mitigations are to be applied as stated in [Section 1](#) of this policy.

5.5 Responsibilities of the school

- To support students when there is prolonged absence from learning and teaching due to difficult and unforeseen circumstances.
- To put measures in place that support alternate modes of learning and teaching such as remote lessons.
- There may be situations where, despite attempts made by the school, the student who has prolonged physical absence from a school is not able to participate, or can only occasionally participate remotely in their learning and teaching, due to illness or other circumstances. This adverse circumstances policy will need to be applied by the school where these situations occur.
- For students experiencing mental health challenges related to attending school, such as severe anxiety, or phobias, the school will play a pivotal role in maintaining the continuation of their education. If the school can support the student when they first show signs of school refusal, it can prevent continuous absence and, in some cases, potential withdrawal from school.
- To implement strategies like providing exit cards for students to leave lessons when feeling overwhelmed due to anxiety, reducing their workload and allowing for partial attendance. The access and inclusion policy can also offer guidance to support students facing these challenges.
- When a group of students is affected by an adverse circumstance, it is the responsibility of the school to develop a support plan wherever possible. Some mitigation measures may include mental health support, regular communication with the students and parents or legal guardians, remote learning, flexible scheduling and catch-up programmes (during and/or after the occurrence of the adverse

5. Adverse circumstances that cause prolonged absence from learning and teaching

circumstance). Consideration should be given to the process by which students will return to the classroom.

6. Mitigation measures

6.1 Access arrangements for adverse circumstances during learning and teaching

These mitigation measures pertain to students sitting for IB assessments in the DP and Career-related Programme (CP) and MYP eAssessments.

Schools are expected to provide support and put systems in place to address the gaps in learning and teaching where a student or group of students has faced disruption due to difficult and unforeseen circumstances.

The IB can offer several approaches for a student to complete their IB assessments where there has been disruption to learning and teaching.

6.1.1 Extension to learning and teaching

The student will be eligible to apply for an extension to the duration of the programme. The learning and teaching can be extended by a year or two. This can be applied to all the subjects.

State-funded schools would bear the responsibility of considering the availability of funding for the extension of the student's IB programme, if this option is to be selected.

6.1.2 Deferral of assessment

The student will be eligible to apply for a deferral of their assessments to the next or future session. This can be applied either to some or all the subjects.

6.1.3 Flexibility in demand for non-assessed components

This arrangement covers the non-assessed components: creativity, activity, service (CAS) within the DP, service learning within the CP, and service as action within the MYP.

Most schools will have their own expectations of the number of hours a student must spend on non-assessed components. This helps ensure that all students are treated equally regarding these elements of an IB programme. However, in situations where a student has not been able to attend school for a prolonged period, it may not be equitable to expect them to complete the same duration of CAS, service learning or service as action. In this situation, it is appropriate to focus on the experiences gained by the student in more detail.

If the school considers that the student has gained the necessary experience from these non-examination components despite their disruption to learning and teaching, they can be signed off. This can include instances where the school expects students whose learning has not been disrupted to have spent more time engaging in these activities.

6.1.4 Advanced sign-off of CAS or service learning

This is when the school can ensure that a student will complete their CAS or service learning two to three months following the written examinations. Exceptionally, the IB can allow the school to sign off these components in anticipation of the student completing them.

7. Submitting requests to the IB

7.1 IB authorizations of requests

The school will need to submit a request to the IB with the following two types of supporting document.

- Medical or psychological documentation. This may include a note from a medical or psychological professional or a report from the school administration, counsellor or nurse (as appropriate)
- A learning plan for the student

All requests will be reviewed through an approvals process on a case-by-case basis.

7.1.1 Request for extension to learning and teaching

To extend the learning and teaching period, the school must apply for authorization from the IB accompanied by the required documentation.

- Medical or psychological documentation or a statement from the school that justifies the need to implement this measure
- A proposed learning plan for the student that has been created with the student and parents or legal guardians

7.1.2 Request for deferral of assessment

To request a deferral of assessment, the school must submit a request to the IB as stated in [Section 1](#) of this policy.

7.1.3 Request for flexibility in demand for non-assessed components

Where the student has completed most of the requirements for the non-assessed components of their programme (CAS for DP, service learning for CP, service as action for MYP), and the school considers that the student has gained the necessary experience from these non-examination components despite their disruption to learning and teaching, they can be signed off.

Although authorization for this mitigation is not required, the school must inform the IB in case this arrangement is implemented.

7.1.4 Request for advanced sign-off of CAS or service learning

A request to apply this mitigation can be submitted when the school can ensure that the student will complete their CAS or service learning two to three months following the written examinations. The IB can exceptionally allow the school to sign off on these components in anticipation of the student completing it.

8. The adverse circumstances policy in action for prolonged absence

Examples

The following are examples of the adverse circumstances policy in action for prolonged absence from learning and teaching. They suggest what may be considered as adverse circumstances during learning and teaching, and how the mitigation tools may be applied.

8.1—Close to the end of the first year of their DP programme, a student develops severe social anxiety and shows signs of panic and phobias. The student is unable to leave their house and interact with people, which includes not being able to attend school. The school, along with the parents, designs a plan where the student can attend online classes and be given remote study time through learning support from the school. Nevertheless, the student is unable to participate even virtually due to their severe anxiety. The school, the student and the parents decide that the best way forward for the student would be to extend their learning and teaching by a year.

8.2—Due to a natural disaster, the area of the city where a school is located has intermittent electricity services. In addition, for safety reasons, the facilities must be checked before classes can resume. Whenever possible, the school can establish a communication network, sending messages to students and their families. The focus is on the emotional well-being of the students and their families and fostering a sense of community. The school is able to provide remote lessons within a week of the natural disaster, so there is no need to apply the policy.

8.3—A student with a medical condition is unable to attend school. They are participating in school activities and lessons through remote learning. However, the student is unable to participate in theatre. The student and the school decide to request authorization for a deferral of this subject to the next session. This arrangement is authorized by the IB because the documentation is provided.

8.4—A school has devised a study plan for a student who needs to be absent from school for several months due to chemotherapy treatment. The student will be participating remotely through online classes. Prior to commencing the treatment, the student had nearly fulfilled the requirements of CAS in the DP. The teacher responsible believes that the student has achieved their goals and has gained valuable experience through CAS. As a result, the school has contacted the IB to request approval for advanced sign-off of the student's CAS. In line with the policy, the IB agrees to this.

8.5—A student must undergo medical treatment daily for a few months. This situation prevents them from attending school. The school designates a group of students and teachers who will maintain contact with the student and their family. Lessons are sent in video format so that the student can take them when appropriate. In this case, there is no need to apply the policy.

Appendix 1: Additional suggestions for dealing with adverse circumstances

The following suggestions are examples of arrangements that the school can implement to facilitate the continuity of learning and teaching in the event of adverse circumstances and mitigate the inability to attend school.

Suggestions for continuation of learning and teaching during prolonged absence

- Maintain communication and provide work for students who are unable to attend school due to illness or other reasons. This should be planned with the parents or legal guardians.
- Establish an understanding of the student's available tools and resources.
- Create regular check-ins to connect with students and parents or legal guardians to establish an open and ongoing dialogue.
- In collaboration with students and parents or legal guardians, design a learning plan, including the use of hybrid learning, multimodal resources and tools.
- Provide opportunities for optional collaborative learning with peers.
- Offer the student online learning activities.
- Establish a remote connection system to facilitate virtual classroom teaching.
- Set up regular meeting times with parents or legal guardians to plan the learning and teaching for the student.

Suggestions for social and emotional well-being during prolonged absence

- Create daily or regular check-ins with the student to support well-being, especially to help them feel included and connected with the school, even if they are not able to be physically present.
- Create regular check-ins to connect with parents or legal guardians, establishing open communication and planning for continuity of learning.
- Liaise with parents or legal guardians and other agencies as appropriate to support reintegration, and develop a reintegration plan.
- Facilitate opportunities for the student to connect with others, such as a circle of friends or some peer buddies who will connect with the student regularly.
- Facilitate circles of friends who will connect with each other regularly when the entire school or cohort is affected.
- Support the student's reintegration into the school community through carefully planned social activities, such as visiting the school for an hour or coming to play with friends at break times.

Appendix 2: Updates to the adverse circumstances policy

This appendix outlines the updates made to this publication over the past two years. The changes are ordered from the most recent to the oldest updates. Minor spelling and typographical corrections are not listed.

Corrections for June 2024

Throughout the publication

Alignment of language with other IB documentation. The term “candidate” has been replaced with “student”.

Purpose of the policy

Introduction of revised or improved content. Information regarding the purpose of new policy details has been added.

5: Adverse circumstances that cause prolonged absence from learning and teaching

Introduction of revised or improved content.

This is a new section. It considers the occurrence of adverse circumstances leading to prolonged absence from learning and teaching.

6: Mitigation measures

Introduction of revised or improved content.

This is a new section. It considers access arrangements for adverse circumstances during learning and teaching.

Appendix 1: Additional suggestions for dealing with adverse circumstances

This is a new appendix. It provides suggestions for continuation of learning and for social and emotional well-being during prolonged absence.