

Got Proof?

Passed by: Senedd

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Policy lapses: **19/04/2024**

Status: Completed

Officer Responsible: Academic Affairs

Summary

AberSU should lobby Aberystwyth University to permanently introduce a self-certification approach to Special Circumstances and Extension requests

Details

Aberystwyth University are currently trying to give the current 'special circumstances' process a much needed glow up, as being pushed by external bodies such as HEFCW and the OIA. As part of these changes, I propose that AberSU should use this opportunity to lobby for the introduction of self-certification to our current processes - basically, let students apply for special circumstances without evidence where it is difficult to provide it.

The Problem

At present, all Aberystwyth students are expected to provide evidence in support of an application for special circumstances or an extension. This wouldn't be so bad if the list of acceptable pieces wasn't so... small. If a student loses a loved one? Death certificate. Had a medical issue? Full medical transcript. When facing hard times and unable to perform, students are being put in a position comparable to that of a treasure hunt to fight for supporting documentation, when they should be focusing on completing their work to the best of their ability during a tough situation. To make matters worse, there are countless barriers students must face to acquire this evidence, from an already stretched NHS to GDPR and privacy as just some examples. There is no 'one size fits all' when it comes to life and how it may affect a students academic performance, yet we approach special circumstances in a way that is cut and dry, and insensitive when it comes to acquiring proof.

The Idea

Aberystwyth University should adopt the good practice of other universities (Bangor, York and Nottingham to name just a few) and introduce a self-certification policy, allowing students to occasionally apply for special circumstances without supporting evidence. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, our institution trialled this approach with success, and there is no reason this should not continue as a permanent change.

Action

AberSU should lobby Aberystwyth University to permanently introduce a self-certification approach to Special Circumstances and extension requests.

Submitted by: Chloe Ann Wilkinson-Silk

Actions List

Action Taken	Name and Role	Date
<p>The Academic Affairs Officer (2023-24) is in talks with the University and how many students are not able to use special circumstances because they have not yet been diagnosed due to the long waiting lists. Student services recognise this and are looking into how they can best support these students who don't have the proof. The university are also looking into a different way of handling special circumstances to that it is fair across departments.</p>	<p>Anna (Academic Affairs Officer 2023-24)</p>	<p>November 2024</p>
<p>Students are allowed to use a student services report as proof of extenuating circumstances. However we feel that this is not being consistently applied in different Depts. Exploring a group to look at this Officers are talking to key staff about including this in the Strategic Equality Plan (April 2023).</p>	<p>Anna (Academic Affairs Officer 2023-24)</p>	<p>November 2024</p>
<p>A 'Fit to Sit' policy has passed at University Senate (June 2024) thanks to a close working relationship between the Academic Affairs Officer and the University. The policy is to be rolled out from September 2025. 'Fit to Sit' will replace the current special circumstances process, meaning students can declare themselves unfit to sit the assessment up to five days before the exam/assessment deadline. Thereby, there is no need for "proof of reason" (i.e. death certificates, doctor notes etc.), allowing students a form of self-certification. The University is currently outlining the details of the policy, to then be trialled in the 2025-2026 Academic year. A report will be made for Senate June 2026 to show the impact of the policy, and if it is deemed a success then it will continue into the academic year thereafter.</p>	<p>Anna (Academic Affairs Officer 2023-24)</p>	<p>June 2024</p>