

Graduate School of the Environment
Sudden and Severe Change of Circumstances Policy
Version 2.1 Approved November 2025

1. Introduction and Scope

- 1.1. This document describes the procedure for removing liability for payment of fees for module bookings or accommodation/catering once the cancellation period closes, or changing registration such as full time to part time or *vice versa* or changing programme.
- 1.2. For module bookings, the cancellation period is a minimum of 4 weeks before the module start date. For accommodation bookings, the cancellation period is 14 days before the booking date.
- 1.3. This policy and application form is for use by students enrolled on all programmes validated either by Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) or University of East London (UEL).
- 1.4. Sudden and Severe Change of Circumstances are those events which are both 'sudden' and 'severe'. Sudden in that they arise rapidly/unexpectedly and could not have been predicted. Severe in that the circumstances would prevent you from engaging with the teaching or attending the module/site.
- 1.5. Any form of application that is incomplete or not correctly submitted will not be considered.

2. Cancelling a Module

- 2.1. Students wishing to cancel a module should first speak with Student Support to ensure this decision does not impact their registration on the course.
- 2.2. Applications can be made through the Student Forms Hub online and should be submitted no later than 1 week following the module start date.
- 2.3. Any evidence of module engagement via CAT's MS Teams Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), university VLE systems or in person will result in a declined application and the module fees will not be refunded.
- 2.4. Modules which are cancelled must be replaced with the appropriate minimum credits that academic year to remain active as a student, otherwise you may be withdrawn from your remaining modules and placed on intermission for that term/academic year. Normally a minimum of 60 credits should be taken in any single academic year. Please see the Progression Policy for more information on this.
- 2.5. If approved, the module invoice will be credit noted. Any payments that have been made can be transferred to the next module or refunded. Students will be asked which option they would like once the application is approved.

3. Cancelling Accommodation or Catering requirements

- 3.1. Students wishing to cancel accommodation/catering bookings should email Student Support in the first instance.
- 3.2. Applications can be made through the Student Forms Hub online and should be submitted no later than 1 week following the booking start date.
- 3.3. If approved, Student Support will inform the student of how to claim the refund which will usually be via WISE reception (either phoning or in person).

4. Changing registration / re-registration

- 4.1. If considering changing programmes or mode of study, *it is strongly recommended that this is discussed first with an Academic Tutor and Student Support* before making any formal application.
- 4.2. Changes in programmes involving different university validating partners will need to consider your academic suitability for the new programme and transferability of previously studied modules i.e. accreditation of prior learning, as is normally considered under the Admissions Policy. This may mean that all your previously studied module credit will not be transferred.
 - 4.2.1. The programme specification of the proposed new programme will show which core and optional modules are required for that programme. The programme specifications are available on the CAT website.
- 4.3. Changes in registration or re-registration will mean you are subject to the fees, terms and conditions of the programme at that time.
 - 4.3.1. Please note the University partners have different fee liabilities for CAT students. Your initial registration fees included the fee liability to the original university. If changing university you will be required to meet the new university fee liabilities and will be informed of these costs at the time.
- 4.4. If a transfer of programme follows a University revalidation process, which normally occur every five years, CAT will have study transitional arrangements in place allowing you to stay with the existing programme or move to a revised version. Transitional arrangements will still allow for a completion of your original programme in all foreseeable circumstances. Assuming no change in validating university partners occurs, there will be no fee changes due to these transitional arrangements.
- 4.5. An initial application should be communicated by email to Student Support, who will support you with this process.

5. Supporting Evidence for Sudden and Severe Change of Circumstances Form

- 5.1. In all cases it is a requirement to provide us with independent evidence for an application for sudden and severe change of circumstances. The evidence must support the reasons stated in the application and be dated within the same timeframe as the circumstances occurred.

5.2. The following table is provided for guidance only, and lists some common circumstances where requesting an application for Sudden and Severe Change of Circumstances is / is not considered acceptable:

<p>Acceptable reasons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are suddenly taken ill at the start of module teaching, or caring for someone taken ill during that period; • If you are involved in an accident, injury or serious incident that prevents you from engaging with the module/attending in person • If you experience a bereavement or family illness that prevents you from engaging with the module/attending in person • Serious personal problems such as caring responsibilities; • Unexpected professional or financial problems; • Delays in accessing student support. 	<p>Examples of evidence requirements</p> <p>In the case of personal or family illness, a 5 day self-certification is permissible. Longer periods of illness will require medical evidence such as a medical note, appointment details etc.</p> <p>Financial statements</p> <p>Solicitors letters</p> <p>Parent letters from a school or college</p> <p>Death certificate</p> <p>Independent verifiable evidence is required in all circumstances and the Student Support team will be happy to provide advice if needed.</p>
<p>Non-acceptable reasons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor illnesses e.g. coughs, colds; • Unverifiable travel difficulties; • Procrastination e.g. lack of motivation, poor study habits • Not realising other deadlines are imminent or poor time management; • Any event that could have reasonably been expected or any anticipated commitments (holidays, weddings, moving house, changes in employment, sporting competitions etc.). 	

5.3. Supporting evidence can be uploaded directly if using the online application form, or alternatively please email your supporting documents to the Student Support Office student.support@cat.org.uk.

5.4. Please note that all supporting evidence will be treated in accordance with our Data Protection policies, further details of which can be found in our [Privacy Notice](#).

6. What happens to my form and how are decisions made?

6.1. Application forms and supporting evidence will be treated as confidential by the Student Support Officers and will only be forwarded to a member of the Sudden & Severe

Circumstances Panel for their consideration. All evidence will be presented anonymously to ensure confidentiality and impartiality.

- 6.2. The acceptance or rejection of the case will be considered on the basis that the event has been both sudden and severe and that there is sufficient third party evidence to prove that the event occurred. The acceptance or rejection of the case who will decide on the basis of the case presented and the evidence provided.
- 6.3. Where the case is accepted the student will be allowed to change their mode of study, module choices or go on intermission without incurring any financial penalty. Where the case is rejected, the student will be required to pay the cost of the modules already chosen.

7. Appeals

- 7.1. There will be no appeal against the outcome of a Sudden and Severe Change of Circumstances application unless an administrative error has been made.
- 7.2. If you believe an administrative error has been made, please contact the Student Support team in the first instance.

8. Additional key information

- 8.1. Acceptance of this form will not result in any remarking of work, a change of module mark or the chance to retake a module.
- 8.2. If you cannot hand in work due to extenuating circumstances (which may be sudden and severe) then a CAT 'Extenuating Circumstances' form must be filled in and submitted at the appropriate hand-in time in lieu of the work concerned – please refer to the Extenuating Circumstances policy.
- 8.3. If the circumstances relate to access to power or IT equipment, evidence can be supplied by mail to The Student Support Office, Graduate School of the Environment, Centre for Alternative Technology, Pantperthog, Machynlleth, Powys SY20 9AZ. Please note that in these circumstances it is advised to get evidence of post dates and transit, such as by using a recorded delivery. Also note that the timescales for postage will be longer than for email and please account for this where possible.

Date Document Approved: November 2025

Version 2.1

By: Academic Council

To be reviewed by: July 2028

Appendix A

The Electronic form is available for completion through the GSE Student Forms Hub on Teams; the details below are for illustrative purposes.

Sudden and Severe Change of Circumstances Form

PLEASE COMPLETE ALL SECTIONS OF THE FORM – *this section ensures anonymity is secured for the student. Please do not write your name on the form.*

YOUR DETAILS

Student Number:	
Module Code	

Is your SSCC for

	<u>Module Invoice</u>
	<u>Accommodation Invoice</u>

<u>Booking ID</u>	<u>This can be found on the Booking Invoice and is 4 letters-6 digits eg. ABCD-01012</u>

SECTION B– DETAILS OF THE SUDDEN AND SEVERE EVENT

Reason for SSCC

Academic (agreed with tutor)

Employment

Health (physical/mental)

Personal Circumstances

<p>Brief description of the event</p> <p>Please include the dates or time periods when the events occurred.</p>	
---	--

<p>Please explain how these events have impacted on you</p>	
---	--

Supporting Evidence

All applications for SSCC must be accompanied by third party evidence

Please note that all information submitted using this form will be treated in accordance with our Data Protection policies, further details of which can be found in our Privacy Notice.