



UNIVERSITY OF
LIVERPOOL

Veterinary
Postgraduate
Unit

STUDENT HANDBOOK



Veterinary Professional Studies
(Postgraduate Diploma/MSc)

WELCOME FROM THE PROGRAMME DIRECTOR

Dear Student,

On behalf of everyone here, I extend a very warm welcome to the University of Liverpool's Veterinary Postgraduate Unit, which sits within the School of Veterinary Science.

I am delighted that you have chosen to progress from your certificate studies to a higher degree award and I hope you find your continuing study rewarding. Please read this handbook carefully as you will find substantial changes to some of the rules from CertVPS study. In particular, extensions are not able to be granted without approved extenuating circumstances and the timeframes for study are limited.

Further information on all our programmes and options for further study can be found on our [website](#). Alternatively, please telephone our office to speak to one of the team who will be more than happy to help.

In the meantime, we hope you enjoy your studies with us at Liverpool.



Dr Jo Ireland
Programme Director (PgDip/MSc Veterinary Professional Studies)

PURPOSE OF THE HANDBOOK

This handbook is applicable to anyone studying with us on a higher degree (PgDip or MSc) in the University of Liverpool's Veterinary Professional Studies programme. It has been written to provide all the information you need to help you understand how your study is organised, where you can obtain further information and assistance, what you can expect from the unit, and also what we expect from you.

You should read it thoroughly during the early weeks of your programme. If you need to refer back to it at any point you will find a copy within your modules on our online teaching and learning platform.

The University of Liverpool has a PGT Handbook for all of its PGT programmes which can be found here <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/student-administration/my-student-record/student-handbooks/>. This handbook has a lot of generic information applicable to students studying across all PGT programmes at the University of Liverpool. However, the information in this handbook is specifically for you.

KEY CONTACTS

Directors

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Lucy Barrett

Senior Administrator/Academic Support
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Assessment/Student Support

Claire Lomas & Dave Dudley

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Lucy Maylor & Raymond Cheung

Student/Assessment Support
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Journal Club Support

Elizabeth O'Sullivan

E-Mail: eosulliv@liverpool.ac.uk

Module Enrolments and Queries

**Carol Clarke, Lyn Young, Jackie Sheppard
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THE VETERINARY PROFESSIONAL STUDIES PROGRAMME

The programme targets veterinary surgeons currently employed and actively working in practice. It is designed to develop employment-related skills for qualified veterinary surgeons in a chosen species and subject area of their profession. As such, it is designed to enhance current practice within existing employment, or provide opportunities for practitioners to practice in more advanced or species/subject specific practices.

We deliver our modules as part of a fully-taught, structured e-learning programme and students are supported by veterinary surgeons who are specialists in their subject area. You will not work in isolation but as part of an online teaching group, with regular contact with your fellow students and academics online via discussion boards and, in some cases, evening journal clubs. This virtual learning environment also includes full access to the University of Liverpool's extensive online library.

Modules are provided over three semesters each year, commencing in September, January, and April, except for the Research Project module, which is only available in September each year. A copy of the timetables can be found on the [website](#).

Programme Aims

This programme aims to:

1. develop the professional skills and knowledge of veterinary surgeons with emphasis on clinical reasoning and evidence-based clinical practice, enabling them to be competent independent practitioners, delivering a consistently high standard of practice to their clients;
2. produce high calibre graduates equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to play leading roles in the veterinary profession and to be active participants in lifelong learning.

Programme Structure

Postgraduate Diploma in Veterinary Professional Studies (120 credits)

Candidates who successfully complete a further 60 credits following the CertAVP or the CertVBM with the University of Liverpool will also be eligible for a PgDip in Veterinary Professional Studies. Candidates can choose from further CertAVP modules, the Veterinary Business Management programme or a range of or a range of 10 or 20 Credit modules including Clinical Audit, Evidence-Based Veterinary Medicine, Clinical Governance in Veterinary Practice, Clinical Placement modules, and modules in Epidemiology and Social Science Methods.

Candidates who completed their University of Liverpool PgCert in Veterinary Business Management first and progress to a higher award in Veterinary Professional Studies must complete the core A-FAVP.1 module and one of the B modules.

The Veterinary Business Management modules are only available to students who take the entire programme and individual modules cannot be used. Students who wish to have some VBM exposure but not the full programme can instead take the C-VML.1 Principles of Veterinary Management and Leadership module.

Maximum registration period: 4 years*

Master's in Veterinary Professional Studies (180 credits)

Candidates who successfully complete the final Research Project module (60 credits), in addition to 120 credits with the University of Liverpool, will be eligible for an MSc in Veterinary Professional Studies. Entry onto this module is allowed following successful completion of 80 credits of the programme so that students can time the single entry point for the module to suit their needs.

Maximum registration period: 6 years*

***The maximum registration period takes into account all extensions and interruptions and any resit opportunities and requires all grading to be complete and ratified at module review board, so students must allow at least one semester after they complete their studies to finalise their degree award.**

Programme Learning Outcomes

PgDip

On successful completion of the PgDip, candidates will be able to demonstrate:

1. an in-depth knowledge of the diagnosis and management of animal diseases and disorders and a critical awareness of developments at the forefront of their area of professional practice;
2. an in-depth understanding of the processes of clinical reasoning and evidence-based medicine and the ability to incorporate these into veterinary practice;
3. critical evaluation the efficacy and efficiency of their practice and, where appropriate, to propose new approaches to professional practice.
4. a critical awareness of professional, ethical and legal issues that frame veterinary practice;
5. a comprehensive understanding of effective communication at different levels including clients and professional colleagues;
6. a systematic understanding of how established techniques of research and clinical enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in their professional area;
7. a comprehensive understanding of the core areas of veterinary business management; finance and accounting, human resources, marketing and business strategy and entrepreneurship (Veterinary Business Management modules only).

MSc

On successful completion of the MSc, candidates will be able to demonstrate:

1. an in-depth knowledge of the diagnosis and management of animal diseases and disorders and a critical awareness of developments at the forefront of their area of professional practice;
2. an in-depth understanding of the processes of clinical reasoning and evidence-based medicine and the ability to incorporate these into veterinary practice;
3. critical evaluation the efficacy and efficiency of their practice and, where appropriate, to propose new approaches to professional practice.
4. a critical awareness of professional, ethical and legal issues that frame veterinary practice;
5. a comprehensive understanding of effective communication at different levels including clients and professional colleagues;
6. a systematic understanding of how established techniques of research and clinical enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in their professional area;
7. a comprehensive understanding of the core areas of veterinary business management; finance and accounting, human resources, marketing and business strategy and entrepreneurship

(Veterinary Business Management modules only);

8. undertake independent research, critically evaluate research methodologies and develop critiques of them, and propose new hypotheses for the implementation of research results into practice.

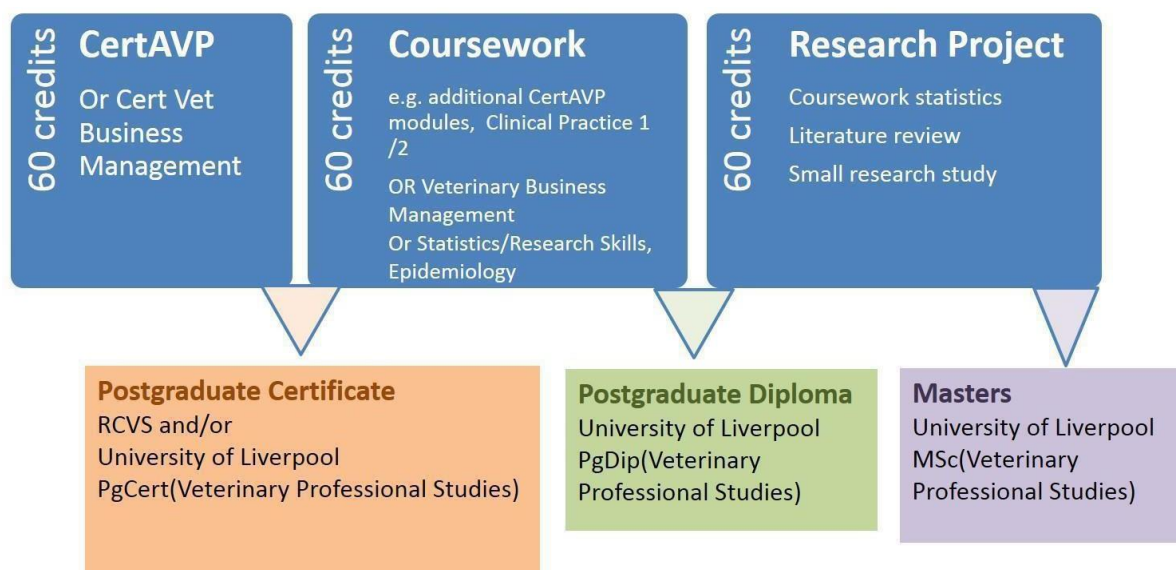
Available Modules

Modules can be chosen from any CertAVP designation - Equine, Small Animal, or Production Animal - or the Veterinary Business Management (PgCertVBM) programme.

The following modules are also available as part of the Postgraduate Diploma / MSc in Veterinary Professional Studies:

- Clinical Placement Modules 1 and 2 (20 credits each)
- VETS777 Research Project Module (60 credits)
- Introduction to Epidemiology (20 credits)
- Animals in Society and Introduction to Social Science Methods (20 credits)
- Evidence-Based Veterinary Medicine (10 credits)
- Clinical Audit (10 credits)
- Clinical Governance in Veterinary Practice (10 credits)
- Other modules may become available depending on demand.
- Some modules may be recognised from other programmes either within or outside the University of Liverpool to build up credits towards a PgDip or MSc: please ask the VPU Support team (vpusupport@liverpool.ac.uk) for more information.

Credits cannot be counted towards more than one University of Liverpool award (degree) i.e. candidates who have graduated with a PgCert in Veterinary Business Management (PgCertVBM) from the University of Liverpool cannot use the same credits towards a Veterinary Professional Studies higher award. However, if an award is not taken (i.e. you continue and do not graduate), all modules undertaken can count towards a higher degree.



COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS

There are several ways in which we will communicate with students, and it is important that you familiarise yourself with these areas so that you can check for messages and notices regularly. Failure to do so may mean that you miss important information regarding your study.

Email

All students are provided with a University email account and once your registration is complete, all University communications will be sent to this account. It is very important that you check this regularly, and also during any breaks in your study. To forward your University of Liverpool email onto another account, please review the following [page](#).

If you do email academic or administrative staff, please do so **only** from your University email account stating the programme you are enrolled on and if possible, your student ID number. The staff manage several programmes and this will help us to identify you more easily and respond to your enquiry.

Please try to find information in this handbook, the University of Liverpool's PGT Handbook, through your modules, especially the FAQs section, or through the Veterinary Postgraduate Unit web pages in the first instance. If you cannot find what you are looking for, let us know so that we can provide that information for you and the benefit of other students.

Canvas Based Messaging Service

The platform which hosts the modules (Canvas) also offers the option of a Canvas based messaging service. Email remains the preferred choice for communication but students are welcome to use the Canvas messaging service when contacting one another or their Module Coordinator if their Module Coordinator directs them to do so. Please note, if your Module Coordinator does not ask you to use Canvas messaging, they are unlikely to check messages from there and so please use email or the discussion area.

Student Intranet and Liverpool Life

As a student at the University of Liverpool, you have full access to the [Student Intranet](#). Within this site you will find all the information, advice and guidance required to help you manage your academic life such as online library support, IT support, access to policies and procedures, support around managing your study and much more. We recommend you set the Student Intranet as your home page whilst you are studying.

Within the Student Intranet, you will also find Liverpool Life, which is the University of Liverpool's portal for current students. Within the portal you can access your programme results and transcripts and the facility to request official documentation.

Canvas

Canvas is the online teaching platform (virtual learning environment) used to deliver our modules. Canvas supports learning and teaching activities across the internet and the Veterinary Postgraduate Unit actively uses your modules in Canvas to deliver essential information to students.

This facility takes advantage of web technologies to enable quick and easy provision of module materials and other relevant information, wherever you are in the world. It also allows students to communicate effectively with their peers, academics involved in the module and the VPU staff.

Students are expected to monitor information concerning their study on their online module regularly. Teaching specific information will be communicated via your online module either formally, in the structured sections, or informally in the form of announcements and discussion posts. Examples of the types of information that will be displayed there include: assessment feedback, reminders for key dates and updates to module materials. Generic information about your study will also be communicated via your online module, and examples of the type of information that will be displayed there include: copies of this handbook, FAQs, regulations and guidance, useful web-links, and University documentation such as Extenuating Circumstances Guidelines.

Veterinary Postgraduate Unit Website

The Veterinary Postgraduate Unit's website is: <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/vets/cpd/>

External Post

Sometimes we need to contact you via the external postal system (e.g. issuing certificates) so it is important that the unit is kept informed of any changes to your address.

Telephone Contact

All staff have a direct telephone number and many have voicemail. You can find the numbers within the 'Key Contacts' section within this handbook, but also on each module.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

All members of the University community – students, alumni and staff – share responsibility for the continued success of the institution and our students. The [Student Charter](#) sets out our partnership in learning, what the University will provide and what students should undertake. When reading this charter please bear in mind that in our modular programmes your Academic Advisor is your Module Coordinator in the first instance.

Time and Study Commitment

As a postgraduate student studying at master's level, you are expected to be motivated and self-directed, and are responsible for organising your own time and making sure that assessment deadlines and other requirements are met. As a distance learning student this is particularly important.

The modules are studied over 12 weeks and time commitments may vary week to week, but you are expected to study a minimum of approximately 8 hours a week for a 10 credit module, and 16 hours a week for 20 credit modules and the research project module. If you are having difficulty in meeting any module requirements it is your responsibility to let the Assessment Administrator or your Module Coordinator know.

Online Communication

As an online programme, much of the communication is in written form, such as in group discussion boards, and we ask that you follow these guidelines in order to ensure that communication is effective and productive:

- Communication should be constructive, positive and respectful
- Don't attack or judge prematurely
- Write clearly and re-read messages before sending to avoid misinterpretation or

- misunderstanding
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation
 - Don't use all capital letters, it can be considered SHOUTING
 - Don't use exclamation marks to emphasise frustration!!!!!!
 - Don't use red writing, this can be interpreted as being angry or annoyed
- Don't write impulsively or write anything that you would not say face to face

Computer Requirements

As an online programme you will be accessing a range of tools via the internet. Some basic requirements are required in order to be able to complete the modules. You will need to have access to a computer with the following minimum technical specification and accessories:

For Windows and Mac

- **Operating System:** Windows 10, Mac OS 10.11 (El Capitan) or higher
- **Processor:** Intel i3 or equivalent; 2GHz or higher
- **Hard Drive:** 80 GB or greater
- **Memory:** 2 GB of RAM or higher, 4GB preferred, depending on the OS
- **Internet Connection:** Broadband internet connection. Note: If you are using a mobile internet provider, you may experience timeouts, IP address issues, session problems, or course mail issues caused by latency. You may also incur additional costs if you go over your mobile data allowance.
- **Browser:** Firefox, Google Chrome. To verify that your browser has all required plugins, use [Canvas's Browser Checker](#).
- **Software:** Mozilla Firefox or Google Chrome, Microsoft Office 2016, 2019 or Office 365, up-to-date Adobe Acrobat Reader* (Adobe products are available via a free download).
- **Graphics and Sound:** Capable of viewing video/audio over the internet (try YouTube with your machine to see if you can play and hear a video).
- **Webcam/Microphone:** Camera enabled device or separate webcam. Microphone enabled device or separate microphone
- **Mobile App Requirements:** Device OS iOS 11+ Android 5+

If you do not have the minimum specification outlined above or would like to ask a question about the technical requirements of joining our courses, please contact IT Services on 0151 794 4567 or email servicedesk@liverpool.ac.uk and let them know what equipment you have, as there may be free* updates that can be applied to your computer to help make it compatible with our learning systems.

Feedback from Students to Staff

Student feedback is very important for the review and development of modules and the programme as a whole. All modules have an anonymous module feedback survey which we invite you to complete. In some years, students are invited to take part in the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), run in conjunction with the Higher Education Academy. The overall aim of these surveys is to identify where improvements can be made in order to enhance the quality of individual modules and the programme. A high response rate is vital to obtain useful results and participation is greatly appreciated. Informal feedback is welcome at any time, via the discussion board, email or phone.

Student Complaints

The Student Charter sets out the general entitlements and responsibilities of students. If you believe

you have a legitimate complaint that cannot be solved in the first instance by communication with our team, you should refer to the [Student Charter](#) to clarify what is reasonable for you to expect from the University in the relevant area and whether you have discharged your corresponding liabilities. If, having consulted the Student Charter, you wish to proceed with a complaint you may invoke the Student Complaints Policy and Procedure. For more information please click [here](#).

Academic Advisors

All students at the University of Liverpool have an Academic Advisor and in your programme your advisor is your Programme Director, Jo Ireland. Those of you undertaking the MSc will also have access to a supervisor who will provide advice on your research project. Please contact your Academic Advisor or supervisor for any questions or concerns about your programme.

ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

All assessment follows the university [Code of Practice on Assessment](#) and the [Code of Practice Appendix C for PGT students](#)

Penalties for Word Counts

For assessments that have a recommended number of words, students should not submit work that exceeds this figure by plus 10%. Penalties will be applied for exceeding the word count and in some cases where assessors are looking for students to present work succinctly penalties may be applied as soon as the word count has been exceeded. Please refer to the specific grading rubrics/ assessment criteria for guidance and note that assessors may stop marking beyond the permitted word length. Unless stated otherwise in specific assessment guidelines, tables, diagrams, references and appendices are not included in the word count.

Assessment Authenticity

We have a system of authentication for case reports and case logs for quality assurance of these components of the relevant modules. A document providing further details including what you need to do whilst compiling your case submissions is available in the module case report and case log pages of your module.

In brief, please ensure that you retain the individual case number and supporting documentation such as images/lab results when compiling future case reports. In order to verify cases presented by students as part of a case log or as case reports are genuine we will randomly select one or two students from each module and request copies of supporting documentation for certain work.

Please contact your Module Coordinator if you have any queries after reading the complete document.

Failing Assessments

The minimum module pass mark is 50%. For clinical modules with two or more case reports, students must also achieve at least 50% in the cumulative case report component of module assessment, as well as a final module score of at least 50%, in order to pass the module overall. For non-RCVS PgDip modules a pass mark of 40-49% may be compensable (this does not apply to the VETS777 MSc Research Project module (60 credits) as a maximum of 20 credits are compensable).

A student who fails the overall cumulative assessment for a module (the minimum pass mark is 50%), or fails to submit any must pass components, will have their performance reviewed at the next exam board (Module Review Board) and may be allowed to resubmit one or more items of assessment within 3 months of the module completion date.

The marks gained for any individual module through resit assessment will be capped at 50% for the purposes of calculating the overall average mark and determining classification for an award except where the resit is a consequence of approved Extenuating Circumstances – often referred to as a ‘first-sit’. The actual mark achieved through re-assessment will be the mark recorded on the transcript. The results of any resubmission attempts will be ratified at the next Module Review Board. If resubmission is unsuccessful, or the student fails to resubmit in the invited period, this will be reviewed at exam board and the student will fail the module and progress will be decided. In most cases this will result in termination of studies.

Academic Integrity

By submitting your work you are agreeing to the University's [Academic Integrity Policy](#) that you have not plagiarised nor copied material, nor have you embellished, fabricated nor falsified any of the data nor have you colluded in producing the work nor submitted commissioned or procured work.

Written submissions are required to be submitted via Turnitin and are checked for academic integrity. It is critical that, in order to avoid the potential for inadvertent plagiarism, all works are appropriately referenced. Please ensure that you check the "similarity" score in Turnitin once you submit your work. It is your responsibility to highlight any potential issues arising from this score, particularly if you believe that there is a specific reason for the high score. In general scores above 25% will be critically examined.

If you are unsure of what the University considers plagiarism or how to reference material correctly, please visit our KnowHow resource within your online module or via the student homepages.

A student cannot be assessed more than once on the same piece of work (i.e. case reports, essays etc. cannot be resubmitted even if it is a different module or a different topic).

Assessment Feedback

Feedback can be found in the “Grades” section of the module in Canvas.

Feedback is generally in 3 forms, although not all assessors use all forms of feedback on every assessment:

1. The grading rubric – see below for more details
2. Comments on your actual submission – this often includes editorial corrections
3. General text comments on your work overall

Timing of Feedback

For most certificate modules, if you submit an assignment on time, you can generally expect feedback within 2 weeks of the due date excluding public holidays (for case reports, this will be 2 weeks following the deadline for comments on other cases). However, if you submit late, you may not receive feedback until the end of the module. Feedback can be found in your online module.

For all other University modules and those with larger assessments such as the Research Project or Clinical Placement modules, the typical University feedback period of 1 month will be applied.

Variation in Feedback

There are several examiners who mark the assessments, which is a necessity and dictated by the RCVS and University regulations. This may lead to some differences of opinion on what constitutes the “correct” way to do/write anything!

On the positive side it means that your work is assessed by examiners who are clinically active, research active and others whose busiest area is knowledge exchange. If you can assimilate all the pieces of advice it should help you with any future writing/research project and with the compilation of advisory reports to clients/insurance companies/colleagues etc.

Please be aware that the most critical marking and feedback is often the most valuable to you. Some comments will be made purely to give you the assessor’s personal point of view. This view may not always be the same as you or other assessors. It is important to be aware that you will not have your grade reduced as a result of personal opinions such as this but we consider it extremely valuable to you to have access to specialist opinion. To see a high standard of writing we suggest reading case reports which have been published in The Veterinary Record or similar and use this as a sensible gold standard for writing.

Grading Rubrics

Specific grading rubrics will be used for all assessment, and these will be available within the relevant assessment instructions page in Canvas. These rubrics provide specific feedback on your work, with detailed descriptions of both your allocated result as well as what is required to achieve a better result. All rubrics are available on the module prior to submission of an assessment, and it is your responsibility to view these and ensure your assessment is aligned with the grading rubric.

Moderation

Any student who achieves a final borderline mark of 45-55% will be moderated by the Module Coordinator or designated module moderator.

This means marks may be adjusted to ensure they are consistent and fair. Any moderated cases where there is variation of >10% will be flagged and discussed by both examiners. Where agreement is not easily reached these will be passed on to the External Examiner to mediate the final grade.

Boards

A Module Review Board/Board of Examiners will be formed consisting of academics contributing to the assessment for the relevant module being examined, Programme Coordinator, Programme Director, Module Coordinator or representative and the External Examiner. This will be held three times a year. The primary remit is to approve completed module marks giving the External Examiner the opportunity to comment, however, where students have failed, the Board of Examiners will include a Progress Board and progress of any failed students will be discussed and outcomes decided taking into consideration any extenuating circumstances.

Students should be aware that all assessment grades are provisional pending ratification at the relevant Board.

A final Examination Board will be held for the third Board of Examiners each year to confirm examination marks and recommend award or not (pass/fail) of the final award for each individual taking into consideration any extenuating circumstances.

STUDENT SUPPORT

If you are experiencing difficulties with any aspect of your study, you should contact your Module Coordinator in the first instance, who will be happy to discuss any issues. You can also contact members of the administrative team via their email address, which can be found at the start of this handbook.

Disability Support

The Disability Support Team is responsible for the coordination of support for students with disabilities or specific learning difficulties and provides a specialist guidance and support service for all prospective and current students.

They provide support and advice to students with a wide range of impairments. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Visual impairment
- Hearing impairment
- Mobility impairment
- Medical conditions which may be long term or progressive (e.g. epilepsy, chronic fatigue syndrome)
- Mental health difficulties
- Autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) e.g. Asperger's Syndrome
- Specific learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia)

Please visit the Disability Support Team's [website](#) for further information and guidance.

To speak with a member of the Team and arrange for a support plan to be put in place, please telephone the Disability Support Team on (0151) 794 4714, 794 5117, 795 0323 or contact them by email: disteam@liverpool.ac.uk

Please Note: Any disclosure made must also be reported to the Assessment Administrator on vpusupport@liverpool.ac.uk at the start of your module so that any individual support outlined in your plan (e.g. additional time allowances etc.) can be put into place for you as soon as possible.

PROCEDURES

See the University's [Code of Practice on Assessment](#)

Additional considerations policy

Support is available if unexpected circumstances affect your ability to complete an assessment or sit your exams. We understand that you may encounter unexpected difficulties during your studies that may affect your ability to submit or attend assessments. These include extensions to coursework deadlines and Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PECs).

Extensions to coursework deadlines

If you experience genuine difficulties meeting the original assessment deadline, you are able to submit assessments up to 7 consecutive calendar days after the original submission deadline without penalty. Disabled students with extensions agreed as a reasonable adjustment in their Student Support Information Sheet (SSIS) can submit up to 14 days after the due date. Some assessments are exempt, where late submission is not possible, and these will be clearly signposted on the module.

Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PECs).

Personal Extenuating Circumstances are typically unexpected, unavoidable, and directly impact your ability to complete or perform in your assessment.

You can submit a PEC request when you are experiencing more serious or sustained circumstances that meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Your academic performance is likely to be significantly affected, even if you manage to attend or submit the assessment
- You are unable to submit their coursework, even with the automatic 7 calendar day extension
- You are unable to attend a time-specific assessment, such as an exam, class test, or presentation.

You are expected to submit PEC claims within 14 calendar days of the impacted assessment (wherever possible).

For more information extensions to deadlines and PECs, including how to submit a PEC claim, please see the [University's Additional Consideration pages](#).

Interrupting your Studies

You may find it necessary at some point during your study to interrupt your studies. This may be for a variety of reasons, which can be personal, financial or academic.

The University has a number of support services available for you if you need guidance or advice. In all cases, we advise you to discuss any possibility of suspension with your Programme Lead.

To further understand this procedure and the potential impact it may have on your studies and circumstances, please see the [University's pages on Interrupting your studies](#).

Assessment Appeals

The University is committed to ensuring that it provides for its students a high-quality educational experience, supported by appropriate academic services. It recognises, however, that there might be occasions when students will feel that they have cause to appeal against an academic decision made by a Module Review Board or Board of Examiners in relation to their studies.

The Assessment Appeals Procedure outlines the details of appeal considerations and, in the event of an appeal being unsuccessful, students' rights to further appeal. For the most up to date procedures, timescales and links to the policy, please click [here](#).