



HIGHER EDUCATION EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES PROCEDURE

Originator: Academic Registrar
Approved by: Academic Board

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1. General

1.1. Academic studies are challenging and everyday life is full of ups and downs. We expect students, in general, to be able to cope with normal life events, to manage their workloads properly, and to expect a level of pressure around assessments and deadlines.

1.2. We expect students to use the appropriate support services to help them develop strategies for managing normal difficulties. Course teams, HE administration, student support and other members of staff can help students to access these.

1.3. The following never qualify as extenuating circumstances:

- Holidays, house moves or other events that were planned or could reasonably have been expected;
- Minor illness such as common colds or hay fever;
- Misreading submission information;
- Poor time management;
- Computer or printer failure where the student should have backed-up their work;
- Normal deadline/submission stress;
- Minor life events, unless the circumstances have had a disproportionate impact;
- Accidental submission of an incorrect document;
- In the event of electronic submission, the following will not be accepted as exceptional circumstances:
 - a) submitting the wrong file type or a corrupted file;
 - b) starting the upload after the deadline has passed;
 - c) a claim of University technical issues with no evidence of a system failure e.g. an error message.

1.4. The following may only be regarded as exceptional if there is evidence that they are unforeseeable, unavoidable and had an impact on the assessment:

- Disabilities for which reasonable adjustments have been made;
- Financial difficulties;
- Fasting, relating to religious observance, affecting capability to create and submit work, unless the fasting significantly affects a student's health in a way that is unforeseen. In such cases the student will need to provide evidence to support an extenuating circumstance claim.

1.5. Extenuating circumstances should be exceptional. In the main, students are expected to manage their health and minor illnesses or disruptions alongside their studies. Extenuating circumstances claims should be reserved for serious situations: significant illness, bereavements, being a victim of crime or the sudden significant illness of a close family member or friend. If students have several weeks or even months to complete a submission, they are expected to work around short-term issues.

1.6. If students are finding that they need to submit an extenuating circumstance claim for every module, then further support may be needed and they should speak to their tutors, an academic progression administrator or Student Support for advice as multiple claims for extenuating circumstances may not be approved.

1.7. Students should also consider if it is more appropriate to suspend studies for a period if there are major health or other personal factors that are preventing full engagement with their studies and their ability to take an active part in their course community.

1.8. Students are reminded that if they have a long-term condition, illness or a disability, the University can provide support with the management of those conditions. Such conditions

do not generally fall under the Extenuating Circumstances procedure, as other measures, such as reasonable adjustments, may be more appropriate forms of support. Students who apply for extenuating circumstances on the basis of the impact of long-term conditions impacting their studies may be referred to the fitness to study procedure.

2. What is an Extenuating Circumstance?

2.1. An Extenuating Circumstance is defined as a serious or significant event affecting a student's health or personal life which is beyond the student's control. These events may be short term but are sufficiently serious enough in nature to result in the student being unable to attend, complete or submit an assessment on time or affect their performance adversely. Extenuating circumstances may include unforeseen cases of illness, serious accident or bereavement.

2.2. Examples of circumstances likely to be taken into account include:

- Serious short-term illness or injury;
- Worsening of an ongoing illness or disability;
- Death or significant illness of a close family member or friend;
- Unexpected caring responsibilities for a family member or dependant;
- Significant personal or family crises leading to acute stress;
- Witnessing or experiencing a traumatic incident;
- A crime which has had a substantial impact on the student;
- Accommodation crisis such as eviction or the home becoming uninhabitable.

3. PROCEDURE

3.1. Introduction

3.1.1. Students should read this procedure and the Academic Regulations before making an extenuating circumstances application. The University expects all appropriate academic, support and administrative staff, to be able to guide students in the operation of this policy.

3.1.2. Students should think very carefully about whether the circumstances are significant before submitting a form. Applications for consideration should normally be accompanied by a medical certificate or other written evidence to support the claim. Table 1 provides examples of typical evidence that would need to be submitted to substantiate a claim. This table is for guidance only.

3.1.3. Whenever necessary, students should consult their GP, Student Support or other relevant professional at the time the issue presents itself and not delay getting support and advice. Students are responsible for payment of any fees associated with providing evidence in support of an extenuation circumstances claim.

3.2. Timelines

3.2.1. It is important to understand that in considering a student's extenuating circumstances the University cannot make an academic judgement on the extent to which their performance in assessment has been affected. For this reason, if a claim is accepted the outcomes will be limited to those set out below.

3.2.2. The University will publish a schedule of deadline dates for applications for consideration of Extenuating Circumstances.

3.2.3. If a student makes a claim for extenuating circumstances after the submission deadline, they would need to demonstrate that they had exceptional reasons as to why they did not make the claim and provide evidence sooner. Exceptional reasons for not submitting a claim on time could include being hospitalised. A claim for extenuating circumstances cannot be made after a student has received their marks for the module.

3.2.4. Telling us about the extenuating circumstances when it is too late for us to help, because a student is not comfortable about bringing them to the University's attention or because they were trying to avoid the issue will not normally be considered an exceptional reason. When the University considers claims, it will always look to see that the timing of events appears to match any claim of impact.

3.3. What is considered by the panel?

3.3.1. Students should first discuss their circumstances with the relevant tutor/course leader, and academic progression administrator or student welfare.

3.3.2. If a student wants their circumstances to be considered they must complete an Extenuating Circumstances Claim Form and submit this, together with all required evidence, to HE Administration.

3.3.3. In order to consider if an event is eligible to be considered under the Extenuating Circumstances Procedure the following is taken into account by the panel:

- Beyond their control - Students must demonstrate that they could not have done anything to prevent the circumstances arising, that they were unforeseen and unpreventable;
- Impact on assessment - Students must demonstrate a significant negative impact on their ability to submit/attend or complete an assessment by the deadline.

3.3.4. When evaluating an extenuating circumstance claim, the following will be taken into consideration:

- The severity and the timing of the circumstances alleged;
- The appropriateness of the evidence provided;
- The extent to which the circumstances would have affected the assessment indicated in the claim;
- The extent of work affected by the mitigating circumstances and the implications of any extension of time or other requested action.

3.4. What needs to be provided?

3.4.1. The extenuating circumstances form is available from the Student Portal. The form should list all the modules which the student believes have been affected by significant personal circumstances.

3.4.2. Evidence to support the claim e.g. medical certificate, statements/ letters/ certificates from professional individuals or organisations must be attached to the claim form (other advice on how to complete it is provided on the form). Submission of extenuating circumstances for an extension must be submitted before the stated deadline for assessment or if making a claim after the submission deadline within 10 calendar days of the circumstances. Extenuating circumstances claims submitted outside these deadlines may not be approved.

3.5. Who makes the decision?

3.5.1. Extenuating circumstances applications are considered by the Extenuating Circumstances Panel. The panel comprises:

- HE Administration Manager (Chair)
- HE Senior Administrator (Secretary)
- Student Welfare representative
- Academic Progression Administrators

3.6. What could be the outcome of the Panel?

3.6.1. We believe it is best for students to submit their work first time, on time. We understand that students can feel anxious and worried as they approach a deadline and as a result, advice and guidance is available from the course team and from student support to help students manage their workload.

3.6.2. Granting extenuating circumstances usually involves additional time and opportunity for a student to perform as would have been the case without the circumstances arising, under this procedure, to ensure fairness the maximum extension normally allowed is 14 calendar days

3.6.3. If taking all factors into account the panel considers that the claim does not qualify as extenuating circumstances, the claim will be rejected and standard regulations will apply. The panel may decide it is more appropriate for the student to be referred to the fitness to study procedure if the claim does not qualify as a valid extenuating circumstance.

3.6.4. However, if the panel agrees that extenuating circumstances claim is approved then they will apply one of the following outcomes:

- a) extend the submission deadline by 7 or 14 calendar days depending on the specific circumstances (note: the normal extension awarded will be 7 days);
- b) provide the student with the opportunity to retake the affected assessment(s) as an uncapped resubmission allowing full marks achieved for the examination or assessment, rather than imposing a cap;
- c) waive late submission penalties (UG only).

3.6.5. The student will be advised whether the claim has been accepted as soon as possible after the Extenuating Circumstances Panel has met.

3.6.6. Once the decision to accept the extenuating circumstances has occurred, the circumstances are considered to be 'spent'. In other words, the acceptance and decision of the panel is judged to be the resolution of the matter. If the same circumstances continue, reoccur, or other circumstances arise which impact significantly on their ability to complete subsequent assessments on time, a new extenuating circumstances application may be submitted but multiple claims for extenuating circumstances may not be approved and approval of one claim does not set a precedent for approval of subsequent claims.

3.6.7. Extenuating circumstances applications considered by the Extenuating Circumstances Panel will be monitored and a summary reported to the Final Examination Boards and the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Examination Boards.

Table 1 Guidance for Extenuating Circumstances Claim

Reason for extenuating circumstances claim	Category A: Acceptable reason for claim	Category A Evidence required	Category B: Reasons for claim that may be considered	Category B: Evidence required	Category C: Unacceptable reason for claim
Serious Medical Illness or accident including mental health conditions	Serious personal injury or medical condition preventing attendance or completion of assessment or submission of work	Written evidence from a registered medical practitioner or evidence from a counsellor	Serious illness of a member of immediate family (e.g. mother, father, sister, brother, child, grandparent, partner, guardian) Serious injury or illness to child or close relative (parent); or Sudden deterioration in a chronic medical condition or disability worsening of an ongoing medical condition	Written evidence from a medical practitioner; and evidence of the impact to the claimant such as written report from a medical practitioner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing medical conditions • Minor illness (such as colds, sore throats, headaches, hay fever) • Minor accidents or injuries • Medical evidence that does not relate directly to the assessment period in question or that can't be attributed as having an impact on the assessment
Bereavement	Death of parent, (including step-parents and legal guardian) child, siblings, spouse or common law partner	Written evidence from a professional such as undertaker, Coroner or Registrar; or death certificate	Death of close relative (not identified in Category A) or friend	Evidence identified in Category A; and evidence of the impact to the claimant such as written report from a registered medical practitioner	
Serious adverse personal/family crisis	Victim of serious crime Theft of work required for assessment Direct experience of terrorist incident or natural disaster Major fire in residence	Written corroboration of the reported crime from Police or other investigating authority and/or written evidence from a registered medical practitioner or counsellor Written evidence from Police or Fire service; Report from accommodation provider	Family breakdown (such as divorce) Unexpected serious financial problems	Evidence from a solicitor; and/ or evidence of the impact to the claimant such as written report from registered medical practitioner Letter stating withdrawal of SLC funding; letter from solicitor/ CCJ or landlord giving details of financial issue and evidence of the impact on the student's studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor Crime • Financial problems • Accommodation problems • General domestic/family problems • House moves • Assessment or exam stress
Court Attendance	Jury service Attendance in court or tribunal as a witness, plaintiff or defendant	Jury service summons Official correspondence from Court of Tribunal Authority			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting friend or relative at court or tribunal
Miscellaneous					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any circumstances which have not clearly impacted on academic performance or do not clearly relate to the timing of assessment • Failing of IT equipment • Private or public transport failure or difficulties

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					<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employment difficulties• Holidays or booked travel arrangements• Poor time management or personal organisation• Criminal conviction
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