

Title: Extenuating Circumstances
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2P: Extenuating Circumstances

Introduction

1. Throughout their studies, students are required to complete and submit, or sit, a wide range of assessments. This will require students to balance their workload and use time management skills to ensure that assessments are submitted to stated deadlines. However, the University recognises that there may be serious adverse circumstances outside of a student's control that prevent them from completing assessments and that it is in their best interests that any extenuating factors should be considered when determining student results.
2. The aim of the University's Extenuating Circumstances (EC) Policy is to:
 - i. make clear the types of serious adverse factors that the University will consider as extenuating circumstances and the process to be followed for submission; and
 - ii. ensure fair and equal treatment of all students when considering extenuating circumstances, including appropriate provision for students with special needs and chronic conditions.
3. The University places great emphasis on supporting its students and recognises that students who have recourse to this policy may require help in both coping with the pressures of the circumstances and in making an effective submission for extenuating circumstances. Students will be encouraged to seek advice from the University's support mechanisms, including Student Achievement Officers via the Student Hub, professional counsellors available via the Student 1st offices and the Solent Students' Union, or equivalent partner support services for students studying at a partner institution.
4. Students experiencing problems not covered by the Extenuating Circumstances Policy should seek advice at the Student Hub, or equivalent for students studying at a partner institution, who can arrange appropriate support.

Definition

5. The University defines extenuating circumstances as:

“Significant, unforeseen and normally short-term matters that result in a major impact on a student's ability to be able to complete, or submit, or attend, an assessment.”

6. The University has other policies to cover longer term matters which impact on a student's learning experience.

Missed learning

7. The University's Extenuating Circumstances Policy cannot make provision for missed learning. In making a submission under the EC Policy students have to consider, with advice from academic staff if necessary, if it is in their best academic interests to retake an assessment at a later date on a deferred basis or to submit a request for a late submission up to five working days after the deadline date. Students who encounter circumstances that impact on their ability to attend tuition for a period in excess of 20 working days are advised to seek advice at the Student Hub, or equivalent for students studying at a partner institution, who can arrange appropriate support. It may be in the student's interest to suspend their studies, or to consider an alternative mode of study, until such time as they have been able to resolve the circumstances in question.

The 'Fit to Study' principle

8. The University operates a 'fit to study' approach to extenuating circumstances. This acknowledges that only the individual student concerned (with advice from others where appropriate) is in a position to know if an event has impacted on his/her ability to undertake an assessment. The student therefore determines if:
 - i. they are 'fit to study' and undertake the assessment; no submission will be accepted under the EC Policy;
 - ii. they have experienced an extenuating circumstance but will be 'fit to study' with additional time; an assessment can then be submitted with a claim for an extension to the deadline date under the EC Policy;
 - iii. they are not 'fit to study' even with an extension; no assessment is submitted and a claim is made under the EC Policy.
9. A student cannot submit both an assessment and an EC submission, except where the student is requesting an extension to the assessment submission deadline.
10. The 'fit to study' principle may be reviewed under appeal in respect of an assessment submission submitted or sat in circumstances where the student has a certified illness that would have rendered them unable to make a rational judgment about their ability to undertake the assessment. Such exceptional circumstances must normally be evidenced by a psychiatrist's report.
11. The 'fit to study' approach recognises that it is in the interest of the student to attempt to demonstrate their ability to meet learning outcomes when the extenuating circumstances in question have passed and when they are fully fit to do so. Extenuating Circumstances Panels are not in a position to judge the impact of particular circumstances on any individual. Thus the outcome of a panel will be to either accept that the evidence presented by the student meets the criteria, or that it does not and the claim for extenuating circumstances will not be accepted.
12. The decisions of an Extenuating Circumstances Panel form recommendations to the student's Unit Assessment Board. Where an Extenuating Circumstances Panel accepts the

circumstances and associated evidence as valid, then a Unit Assessment Board will either award a deferred result for the assessment for which extenuating circumstances are accepted or will confirm the full assessment mark where a student has requested an extension to an assessment submission date. Where an Extenuating Circumstances Panel does not accept that the circumstances and/or associated evidence are valid, then the Unit Assessment Board cannot award a deferred result or accept the extension to the submission and will determine the unit(s) outcome in accordance with the assessment regulations.

Evidence Base

13. For equity and transparency purposes, applications for extenuating circumstances must be evidence based and judged within clearly defined guidelines. This is also essential to support students in ensuring that, where they are not 'fit to study', they understand the nature of paperwork/corroborating evidence required to support a successful submission to the Extenuating Circumstances Panel and the timescales. The areas that the University considers to be valid for extenuating circumstances, and examples of typical associated supporting evidence required to support a successful submission, are stated at Annex A. Students are encouraged to seek advice at the Student Hub, or equivalent for students studying at a partner institution, on whether their circumstances meet the stated criteria and on how to make an effective submission. Supporting evidence should refer directly to how the extenuating circumstances impacted on the student's ability to complete or sit assessments.
14. A statement from a parent/guardian/spouse/partner will not normally be accepted as independent corroboration. Similarly, a statement from an academic member of staff will not be accepted without the additional presence of appropriate documentary confirmation.
15. All evidence should be available in English. Where, for example, an overseas student is taken ill in their home country and corroborating evidence is provided in the language of that country, then it should be accompanied by a translation, certified officially as being correct e.g. by a Notary Public or by a member of staff who is fluent in that language.
16. The University expects that absence through illness must normally be supported by evidence from a medical practitioner and may seek to verify such evidence. Medical self-certification is not acceptable evidence for an extenuating circumstance submission. Students should plan their work so that they can accommodate the disruption of minor illness.

Ineligible extenuating circumstances

17. Extenuating circumstances cover significant, unanticipated incidences and do not encompass normal life challenges that individuals are expected to deal with routinely. The following incidences will not be considered as valid for submission under this policy:
 - i. the down-time of University, or partner (for students studying at a partner institution), computer networks (except for extended periods of time) and problems with personal IT equipment;
 - ii. loss of computer data (such data should be backed-up);
 - iii. accommodation and travel problems;
 - iv. personal/part-time job commitments;

- v. personal holidays;
- vi. peaks in assessment work demands;
- vii. Religious festivals: these are known in advance and students should build any associated commitments in to their assessment planning;
- viii. financial difficulties;
- ix. complaints against staff or in relation to course delivery. These are managed through the University's Student Complaints Policy.

Extensions to the submission deadline date

18. Students may submit assessments up to five working days after the deadline submission date where extenuating circumstances have impacted on their learning and where late submission would put them in a position of being 'fit to study' and to complete the work.
19. In these circumstances students should submit an Extenuating Circumstances Request Form, normally in advance of submitting their assessment, indicating that they wish the EC Panel to consider their formal request for an extension to the submission date. The request must state the EC category under which the student is claiming an extension and must include relevant evidence.
20. All extension requests will be considered by the University's Extenuating Circumstances Panel on the next occasion it sits. Dependent on the timing of an Extenuating Circumstances Panel such requests might not be considered until after the student has submitted the assessment. If the extension request is approved by the Extenuating Circumstances Panel, the student will be given the full grade awarded for the work. If the request is not approved the assessment mark will be capped at 40% for first attempts, referrals will be treated as a non-submission and awarded a mark of zero.
21. Students who submit later than five working days after the deadline submission date, with or without an EC request form for late submission, will not have work marked. The work will be regarded as a non-submission for assessment purposes.
22. The University can normally only accommodate requests for extensions to deadlines for written text assessments and those that do not involve the use of specialist facilities which may not be available outside of normal programmed activity. Students are advised to seek the advice of their academic tutor regarding the possibility of rescheduling assessments relating to group work, presentations and other practical based assessments.

Timing of an Extenuating Circumstances Submission

23. An extenuating circumstances submission can only be made prior to the Unit Assessment Board and must be made before the published final date for submission for that period. Any extenuating circumstances submissions made after this date will only be considered in accordance with the Academic Appeal Policy (Academic Handbook section 2M).

Extenuating Circumstances Panel

24. A University Extenuating Circumstances Panel will be held on a regular basis in order to consider student submissions and provide decisions in a timely manner. Panel members will include:

- i. The Academic Registrar or nominee (Chair);
 - ii. Head of Student Services or nominee;
 - iii. A Students' Union Sabbatical Officer;
 - iv. An academic representative from the Extenuating Circumstances standing panel, with no personal knowledge of the students being presented.
25. The University will provide guidance to Extenuating Circumstances Panels in carrying out the review process. This will recognise that a panel cannot make a judgement on the extent to which a particular set of circumstances has impacted on an individual student's performance. Therefore, in considering submissions, panel decisions will be influenced solely by:
- i. the nature of the circumstances and whether they align with Annex A; and
 - ii. the nature of the documentary evidence provided and whether it aligns with the requirements of Annex A.
26. The Extenuating Circumstances Panel's decision will be entirely based on the evidence provided by the student. A Panel cannot endorse extenuating circumstances where no evidence has been submitted. Decision on an outcome can be 'pending' where exceptional events mean delay in obtaining evidence e.g. death of a family member.
27. Where they deem it necessary, the panel may exceptionally require a student to submit further evidence. However, panels will not interview students as part of the decision-making process.

Student appeals against the decision of a Unit Assessment Board

28. Students will be advised of the outcomes of Extenuating Circumstances Panel deliberations after the Panel has sat; the decision will be confirmed when Unit Assessment Board results are released. Student appeals against a Unit Assessment Board decision confirming the outcome of an Extenuating Circumstances Panel are limited to the following grounds in accordance with the University's Academic Appeals Policy (Academic Handbook Section 2M):

"Where new, relevant, written extenuating circumstances are presented [...] supported by appropriate evidence, that for good reason were not originally made available to the Extenuating Circumstances Panel, and therefore were not considered at the time of the decision of the Unit Assessment Board."

29. Student appeals concerning extenuating circumstances will be referred to the Extenuating Circumstances Panel by the school/service for a decision regarding the validity of the extenuating circumstance and the evidence.

Confidentiality

30. Student extenuating circumstances will normally be processed by assessment officers and disclosed only to members of the Extenuating Circumstances Panel. Exceptionally students may request their claim to be treated confidentially; in this case details are restricted purely to members of the Extenuating Circumstances Panel.

Data Protection Act 1998

31. By submitting an extenuating circumstances form students agree to the University holding this personal data for the purposes of claims for extenuating circumstances. The University will hold this data in accordance with its notification under the 1998 Data Protection Act.

Annex A: Extenuating Circumstances and Valid Evidence

CATEGORY REF.	VALID CIRCUMSTANCE	EXAMPLES OF VALID SUPPORTING EVIDENCE	TIMEFRAMES
A	<p>Acute Illness</p> <p>An illness that is likely to have incapacitated the student during the period he/she might have reasonably been expected to spend time on preparation for submission or for sitting an assessment. This encompasses personal injury/accident with extended impact.</p> <p>Such an illness may also result from an acute episode of a chronic condition for which the student may already have special needs provision, but the episode has impacted on the student to a much greater extent than might normally be anticipated.</p>	<p>A doctor's medical certificate relevant to the period of the claimed extenuating circumstances and stating that the student was unfit to study. A signed statement from a doctor in evidence of the requirement to attend hospital would also be appropriate. <u>The University will not accept student self-certificates.</u></p>	<p>Maximum of 20 working days. Exceptionally up to 25 working days may be allowed where there is a compelling reason</p>
B	<p>Code not in use</p>		
C	<p>Illness of a dependent</p> <p>Acute illness/accident affecting a dependent/close relative that required the constant attention of the student.</p>	<p>A doctor's medical certificate signed to verify the illness, or other medical evidence signed by an appropriate medical professional, together with a statement by the student, explaining why their personal attention was necessary and no other family member could be expected to provide support.</p>	<p>Maximum of 20 working days. Exceptionally up to 25 working days may be allowed where there is a compelling reason</p>
D	<p>Bereavement</p> <p>Death of an immediate family member, partner or close friend</p>	<p>Production of a copy Death Certificate or Coroner's report within one month of the date of the bereavement. Immediate family members are defined as: child, parent, sibling or grandparent.</p>	<p>Maximum of 10 workings days, otherwise additional evidence will be required e.g. medical certificate, or confirmation of the date of funeral as being more</p>

CATEGORY REF.	VALID CIRCUMSTANCE	EXAMPLES OF VALID SUPPORTING EVIDENCE	TIMEFRAMES
			than 10 working days after date of death.
E	Not Used		
F	<p>Court Attendance Jury Service, or attendance at Court or a Tribunal as a witness, defendant or plaintiff, on the date the assessment was due to be submitted or assessment sat OR impacting on the period during which the student might reasonably have been expected to prepare for submission or revise for the assessment.</p>	Official correspondence from the Court or Tribunal confirming attendance requirement.	Length of court attendance plus one week
G	<p>Sport commitment at national/ county level The student is selected to compete at national or county level at sporting events that require absence from the University (or partner institution) on the date the assessment was due to be submitted or assessment sat.</p> <p>Training requirements associated with sporting commitments are not deemed valid extenuating circumstances.</p>	Official correspondence from the relevant sporting body confirming the requirement to be available on specified dates.	Length of attendance at sporting event.
H	<p>Military Reserves The student is in the military reserves (Navy/Army/Air Force) and is required to undertake annual training.</p>	Official correspondence from the Commanding Officer stating that the commitment cannot be moved to another date.	Length of attendance at training
I	<p>Victim of Crime The student was the victim of a crime that was reported to the appropriate authority for investigation and the nature of the crime was such that it was likely to have prevented the timely submission of an assessment or sitting an assessment; or to have impacted adversely on the student during the</p>	Copy of police/crime report.	Maximum of 10 workings days, otherwise additional evidence will be required e.g. medical certificate.

CATEGORY REF.	VALID CIRCUMSTANCE	EXAMPLES OF VALID SUPPORTING EVIDENCE	TIMEFRAMES
	period in which the student might reasonably have been expected to prepare for submission or for sitting an assessment.		
J	<p>Work Commitment: part-time & distance learning students only Where an unexpected and/or non-negotiable work requirement has prevented timely submission of an assessment or studying for/attending an assessment.</p>	Signed correspondence from employer (senior manager) confirming the commitment and the duration and that it could not have been undertaken by another member of staff.	As indicated by employer
K	<p>Other exceptional and personal circumstances that do not come under the categories listed Where students believe they have experienced severe and exceptional circumstances that are not listed here but would reasonably be considered as valid extenuating circumstances, then they should seek advice at the Student Hub (or equivalent for students studying at a partner institution) in good time to meet any stated submission deadlines.</p>	Where the extenuating circumstances is considered to be valid, students will be advised of the nature of the evidence required to support the submission.	Maximum of 20 working days. Exceptionally up to 25 working days may be allowed where there is a compelling reason