

UNIVERSITY OF CUMBRIA ACADEMIC PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES

APPENDIX 3e

Extenuating Circumstances Procedures (including extensions)

1. General principles

- 1.1 University regulations (F12) allow students to formally draw to the attention of Assessment Boards any extenuating circumstances they feel have significantly affected their study and ability to engage in, or submit, assessment. The responsibility for reporting and providing corroborating documentary evidence of the extenuating circumstances lies with the student. Assessment Boards take all valid submissions into account when determining progression and awards to ensure as far as possible that all students are assessed upon equal terms. All claims are treated as confidential.
- 1.2 The Extenuating Circumstances process, which applies to all students, is intended to provide a confidential, transparent and fair way to allow for formal consideration of adverse circumstances beyond the student's control. The Scheme **does not apply** to requests for extensions which are dealt with at the time by programme/module tutors (see later section on extensions).
- 1.3 Students are asked, but not required, to keep their Personal Tutor informed of any adverse personal circumstances alongside engaging in these procedures, in order that appropriate support, study plans, other actions and signposting to additional support can be provided.

2. Defining Extenuating Circumstances

2.1 Extenuating circumstances personal to the student

- 2.1.1 'Extenuating Circumstances' are **serious and exceptional circumstances** outside the student's control, normally **unforeseeable** and **unpreventable**, which the student feels have significantly adversely affected their ability to study and engage in assessment. They are often a serious medical, or serious personal family or severe domestic difficulties, and have usually arisen since they started the programme.
- 2.1.2 Circumstances that may have affected the student for a significant period of time will be considered as ongoing and managed conditions, which should be supported by individual support plans throughout the

duration of the study, to allow the student to engage with the standard submission expectations of the programme. Should at a particular point in time, such as during the assessment period, there be a significant change or escalation in their ongoing managed condition which may be preventing the student from engaging in assessment by the due date then it may be appropriate to consider these through extension or via Extenuating circumstance.

2.2 Types of situations likely to be valid Extenuating circumstances

2.2.1 Examples are:

- i. Identification or acquisition of disability/mental health condition not declared or known to the University, dependent on providing the necessary level of appropriate evidence.
- ii. Serious ill health or substantial changes to the impact of known disability and/or chronic medical condition affecting academic performance at a critical point in the assessment calendar or over a sustained period of time (eg 6 months).
- iii. Personal accident or injury.
- iv. Death or serious illness of family members or close friends.
- v. Major household problems e.g. fire.
- vi. Acute personal or emotional trauma, e.g. family breakdown, breakdown of close personal relationship.
- vii. Major and unplanned changes to employment circumstances or patterns of employment (EXCEPT Full Time Students).
- viii. Impact of natural disaster, civil disruption or other major hazard.

2.2.2 Whilst Extenuating Circumstances typically affect individuals, there may be situations in which an individual effect has been experienced by a group of students (for example the sudden failure of specialist software used on the programme). In these cases, while the circumstances may be relevant at some level for the whole cohort, the impact is individual and would require individual claims. Section 4 below outlines the additional process by which the university may take action at a group level rather than requiring individual claims.

2.3 Circumstances not likely to qualify

2.3.1 These include everyday, avoidable occurrences, and normal student pressures such as:

- i. Colds or known conditions such as hay fever (unless the effects are unusually severe).

- ii. Normal exam stress or anxiety experienced during revision or the assessment period (unless corroborated by medical evidence as a chronic or acute condition and undergoing treatment).
- iii. Non-serious domestic or planned personal disruptions (e.g. moving house, change of job, holidays, weddings, normal job pressure, failed travel arrangements, financial difficulties, oversleeping).
- iv. Work commitments in the case of full-time students.
- iv. Study-related circumstances (e.g. failure of equipment owned by the student, failure to have taken backup copies for work stolen or corrupted).

3. Extensions of time

- 3.1 Students are responsible for submitting work for assessment by the deadlines specified. Where a student knows that for good reason they are going to have a difficulty in submitting work by the due date (e.g. because of sickness and other occurrences including those listed in 2.3.1 above), a request for an approved extension of time may be made. The Extenuating Circumstances scheme should not be used in these circumstances except where extenuating circumstances which prevented submission arose after the extension was approved and prevented the student meeting the extended deadline.
- 3.2 Approved extensions of time will be for a maximum of 10 working days. Extensions should be granted for the shortest period possible and should take into account the time the student has lost due to the relevant circumstances. Programme Leaders should ensure that the extension of time granted is consistent across the programme according to the circumstances presented by students.
- 3.3 Any extension agreed should still permit the assessment item to be marked and moderated in line with formal mark confirmation deadlines. Extensions should not normally be granted beyond the end of the last week of the academic session in which the work is due to be submitted or the date when feedback relating to the assessment is issued to the student cohort.
- 3.4 Students seeking extensions will be asked to provide suitable evidence in support of their application. In cases of ill-health, self-certification is permitted for up to 7 days. Self-certification will only be accepted on two occasions within each academic year.

4. Extenuating circumstances affecting groups of students

- 4.1 Particular conditions known to the University at the time of occurrence (eg disruption in an examination due to noise or staff illness during the study period) may affect groups of students and their performance in the same way. Such problems should be identified by the Examination Invigilator or member of staff and reported to the Assessment and Awards Team in the Academic Registry. The nature of the event, the length of time it extended over, the students/module affected and action taken/recommended (for example adjustments to the marks following discussion in the moderation process) should be indicated. The Chair of the University Progression and Award Board will act to recommend action en masse where justified. The Programme Leader must inform students that the University will initiate this process so avoiding the need for individual submissions by students.
- 4.2 Such instances will be reported to University Progression and Award board.

5. Evidence required to support claims for extenuating circumstances

- 5.1 All claims for consideration of Extenuating Circumstances **must** be supported by independently verifiable evidence. Self-certification is not acceptable evidence for Extenuating Circumstances. The following are examples of such evidence:
- Medical certificate
 - Hospital / doctor's Letter
 - Solicitor's letter
 - Death Certificate or letter from a Funeral Director
 - Police Crime number (and report if available)
 - Statement and letter of support from Personal Tutor, where the Tutor has prior knowledge of the circumstances and they are of a nature that does not have any other form of evidence.
- 5.2 If an examination is missed due to medical problems the student must attempt to seek medical attention on the day, and attach a medical certificate to the claim. Where this is not possible, self-certification for an absence from a timed examination may be accepted. Medical certificates dated days later may not be regarded as sufficient evidence. The certificate must relate specifically to the time of the illness and must contain a clear medical opinion that the student was unfit to take the examination.

6. The Process

6.1 The Extenuating Circumstances Panel

- 6.1.1 Claims and supporting evidence submitted are considered by an independent panel.
- 6.1.2 The Panel will consider how the timing of the adverse events or illness relate to module delivery and assessment dates, as part of assessing the impact on the student.
- 6.1.3 Where a claim is approved, this means that the panel agrees that the evidence shows that the student's ability to engage fully and to achieve their potential has been negatively affected. The approval will confirm which module(s), and which assessed elements of the module(s), are included in the approval. This may be different from the assessments/modules listed by the student in the claim. The student will be notified whether or not ECs have been approved upon the panel's approval. This notification will not provide detail of how the ECs outcome remedy will be applied, this will be confirmed by the University Progression and Award Board (see section below).
- 6.1.4 A valid and approved ECs claim is recorded on the student records system (SITS).

6.2 Action by the University Progression and Award Board

- 6.2.1 The Extenuating Circumstances Panel's decisions, but not the detail of the claims, are reported through formal mark confirmation processes, with recommendations made to the University Progression and Award Board. The University Progression and Board takes the approved EC claims into account when considering the student's performance in the module, progression or award, and can use its discretion as follows.
 - i. **To void the missed first assessment/reassessment** attempt and offer the student a deferred assessment without penalty. Students with approved ECs for first attempts will be permitted deferred assessment with no mark penalty. Students with approved ECs for a reassessment will have the capped mark applied to the reassessment.
 - ii. **To construct an assessment contract** where the circumstances affect more than 40 credits worth of assessed work. This sets out the new dates for completion of the work specified. The normal reassessment attempts will apply. Where a student has multiple reassessments to complete, they may make a request to repeat the stage of study, subject to normal processes for such a request.
- 6.2.2 The Board will have access to a representative from the Panel and the record of its discussion and recommendations for clarification if need be.

7. The Procedure

7.1 Submission of student claims

- 7.1.1 The student completes the Extenuating Circumstances form entering details of the work affected and the nature of the claim, and attaches relevant documentary evidence. The form is submitted to the Assessment and Awards Team in the Academic Registry.
- 7.1.2 Claims and evidence provided retrospectively will not normally be accepted unless there is good reason why they could not be submitted as expected.
- 7.1.3 For students studying with a University partner, written submission is made to the relevant office at the partner institution (as identified in the Partnership Agreement) which is responsible for ensuring that individual submissions are notified to the Assessment and Awards Team.
- 7.1.4 In exceptional cases where a student is incapacitated, the form may be completed on their behalf by a member of University staff. The form must be signed by the member of staff and include the capacity in which they are acting (e.g. Personal Tutor, Programme Leader).

7.5 Notification of Outcome to Students after the Assessment Board

- 7.5.1 Following the University Progression and Award Board, students will be notified of the outcome of the board and the specific outcome for each assessment impacted.

8. Confidentiality

- 8.1 The Extenuating Circumstances scheme is designed to provide a confidential, transparent and fair process for managing Extenuating Circumstances. Information provided through these processes is only made available to the Extenuating Circumstances Panel.—Students have the right to report their circumstances in confidence to a specific member of university staff, for example in Student Services, or to staff in the Students' Union Advice Centre.
- 8.2 Where appropriate, university or UCSU staff can provide corroborating evidence for students indicating that the student has been engaged with them for professional advice or support, and can give their professional opinion as to whether the circumstances are likely to have affected a student's academic performance. However, staff are not expected to supply details of the engagement and it is the student's responsibility to make the nature of the circumstances known in their individual submission. It is also understood that sometimes circumstances can be very personal. Only the panel members and officers of the Assessment team see the detail of the

claim and supporting evidence and confidentiality is always fully respected.

- 8.3 Where university or UCSU staff submit evidence to support a student's claim, the Board may contact the person named supplying the evidence if further information is required and the student is responsible for agreeing with the staff member what detail they consent to have disclosed.

9. Review of the Procedures

The University reviews these procedures periodically.