



## Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Guidelines The Open University Awards 2023-24

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<b>Review date</b>	August 2024

### Significant changes following review

Page Number or Heading Name	Details of significant change	Changes made by
New Policy produced.	This policy replaces the old extenuating circumstance policy for The Open University. It was felt the old Policy was confusing for students and this version has been simplified.	Matthew Twitchett / Sharon Dunphy / Dani Brookes

This policy has been approved by The Open University through its Institutional and administrative revalidation complete in June

# Extenuating Circumstances

## What are Extenuating Circumstances?

Extenuating Circumstances (ECs) are defined as circumstances which are unexpected, significantly disruptive and beyond the students control which may have affected academic performance.

Planning, time management and the meeting of deadlines are part of the personal and professional skills expected of all students.

However, there may on occasions be exceptional circumstances that might affect a student's ability to meet an assessment deadline or affect the level of performance at assessment where an Extenuating Circumstances claim could be considered..

## 1. Extenuating Circumstances Policy

- 1.1. There may, on occasion, be exceptional circumstances that might affect a student's ability to meet a summative assessment deadline. Students have an obligation to make known any special circumstances which have a bearing on the production or assessment of their work. Where appropriate these circumstances may be taken into account by the Board of Examiners in making a decision.

## 2. Extenuating Circumstances Claim Process

- 2.1. Students have an obligation to make any special circumstances known by completing an Extenuating Circumstances Application and submitting it by e-mail to [heextcircs@southessex.ac.uk](mailto:heextcircs@southessex.ac.uk) . Supporting evidence, such as medical certificates must accompany the completed form. Further details of this can be found on the below table.
- 2.2 A full explanation of the circumstances must be included as part of the application process, to confirm the application is acceptable. Fraudulent claims will be investigated under the Student Disciplinary Code.
- 2.3 Courses are designed to ensure the assessment workload is appropriate and manageable for students and therefore extension to deadlines through an Extenuating Circumstance claim should only be considered in extreme circumstances.

### Claim Deadlines

- 2.4. Applications must be submitted as close as possible to the time the circumstance took place and within two weeks of it commencing and no later than two weeks after the final submission hand in. **All final extenuating claims for the academic year must be by the 16<sup>th</sup> of June 2023. Those received after that point will be rejected.**

## **Late Submissions due to Extenuating Circumstances**

2.5. Students should be advised to hand in work at a time where they are satisfied with their submission up to a maximum of six working days beyond that original deadline. Six working days is defined as Monday – Friday, excluding bank holidays. A successful EC application in these circumstances would mean that a student's work would be considered to have been submitted as if on time. Students are advised to discuss with their tutors and/or Higher Education support when opting to submit late.

## **Confidentiality**

2.6. The Extenuating Circumstance process allows matters which are confidential to be made known directly to the members of the Extenuating Circumstances Panel (ECP) and if requested, to the Board of Examiners. Students are advised, in these circumstances, to inform their tutor that they are submitting confidential extenuating circumstances and not to share any further information if requested.

## **3. Consideration of Claims**

3.1. The EC process is separate to the assessment process. All work will be marked as presented with no account taken of extenuating circumstances.

3.2. Extenuating Circumstances applications are presented to an ECP to consider claims and make recommendations to Exam Boards. For an ECP to take place, the Chair and Clerk's attendance is required and at least 2 other members of the panel.

3.4. The ECP shall comprise of the following staff roles who are all employed at South Essex College:

- Director of Higher Education Operations (Chair)
- Higher Education Examinations and Assessments Officer (Clerk) - Minutes
- Undergraduate Assessments Administrator
- Partnership Managers for UEA and UAL
- The Head of Teaching and Learning – ITE (The Open University)
- Curriculum Head - ITE (The Open University) and Access
- A member of Student Support
- The Head of Quality and Compliance Performance and Standards
- Secretary – To take notes and record actions

3.5. The Board of Examiners will receive the recommendations of the ECP, and determine an appropriate decision as laid out in section 4 below.

3.6. In reaching a decision on a final grade or classification, the Board of Examiners will not take account of claims for extenuating circumstances.

3.7. ECP panel meets one a month to consider any extenuating circumstances and will call additional panels if required.

## 4. Board of Examiners Decisions for ECs

4.1. If the Board of Examiners is asked to consider a successful Extenuating Circumstances application, it may choose from the following options:

- a) To condone the late submission of work and award the student an uncapped grade
- b) To offer the student the opportunity to submit the work by deferral as if for the first time and without penalty during the retrieval period

4.2. Where the student is approved for a deferral opportunity, this will be published within the publication of results. The student will be set a deferral brief and a new submission deadline in line with the Summer Retrieval Submissions. The submission will be marked without penalty.

4.3. Where a student fails or fails to resubmit after requesting a deferral opportunity under 4.2 above, the grade from the student's first attempt will be included in the calculation of the student's progression/ classification.

## 5. Guidance for completing the EC Application Form

### What to do if you think extenuating circumstances have affected your work

1. Complete an application for your Extenuating Circumstances to be considered. E-mail the completed form, with evidence, from your College Email to the HE EC inbox [heextcircs@southessex.ac.uk](mailto:heextcircs@southessex.ac.uk). The Extenuating Circumstances form is available to download under The Open University on our [HE Policies and Procedures webpage](#).
2. Complete the form in full, clearly stating the facts of the circumstances that have affected your work for assessment.
3. Make sure you attach relevant formal evidence and documents to support your case (please see below for further guidance). It is your responsibility to provide evidence to support your application. We do not accept photos as evidence alone but you could provide a scan/photo of a doctor's note. .
4. **Be realistic** - short illnesses - such as a cold, stomach bug or routine IT or transport problems are not considered grounds for ECs. Consult the EC Categories table on below before completing the form.
5. **Be specific**. State the dates your performance was affected and why. Indicate specific units or assignments or projects. Tell us what impact the EC has had on your performance at assessment.
6. **Seek help**. If you are not sure whether or when to submit a claim you should consult your Programme Leader, or HE Student Support.

7. Submitting a form with a genuine case does not guarantee you a pass, but the additional time may help in some cases.

### Supporting Evidence

1. Guidance on the appropriate evidence for types of EC claims is available in the table below.
2. Evidence must be in **English** and any translation must be carried out by an official, notarised translator. We will not accept translations from unofficial sources, including personal translations. If you have any difficulties obtaining a translation, please visit <http://www.atc.org.uk/members/find-a-translation-company.html>
3. If you are providing evidence from the Mental Health and Well-being Services, the evidence must relate to the period of assessment for which you are claiming and it must clearly demonstrate that you attended more than one counselling session prior to the assessment deadline.
4. If you are providing evidence from a medical practitioner the evidence must clearly relate to the period of assessment for which you are claiming. The University has produced a guidance document which you can take to your appointment to explain our evidence requirements to your Doctor.
5. Please note that photographs are not accepted as evidence alone.

### Submitting your application

1. All forms should be submitted by e-mail. Please ensure that the form and accompanying evidence are in an accessible format and within normal file size limits. **We are unable to accept pages or formatted document submissions from Share Point, Drop box etc.**
2. Your form and supporting evidence must be submitted as close as possible to the time the circumstance takes place. Prompt action will make it easier to gather appropriate evidence to support your application. Applications should be submitted as close as possible to the time the circumstance took place and within two weeks of it commencing. **All claims must be by the 16<sup>th</sup> of June 2023. Those received after that point will be rejected.**
3. If a student is unable to submit their work by the original deadline, they are advised to hand in work at a time where they are satisfied with their submission, up to a maximum of six working days beyond that original deadline. Six working days is defined as Monday – Friday, excluding bank holidays. Students are advised to discuss with their tutors when opting to submit late.
4. If you are unable to submit within the EC extended period you will be referred to the Board of examiners Exam Boards.

5. Keep a copy of your submitted form and evidence for your own records.

**Please note that panels are held monthly so you will not receive an immediate outcome. If you have applied for an Extension to Submission Deadline, please note that the extension, if approved, is 6 working days, as dictated above, and you should submit within this period if you have not heard back from the Extenuating Circumstances Panel.**

### What happens next?

If your claim is supported by appropriate evidence, it will be considered by the Extenuating Circumstances Panel (ECP). The ECP will establish whether your claim meets the correct criteria and you will receive notification of whether the claim has been approved or rejected, usually within 20 working days.

If your EC application has been successful, it will be taken to the board of examiners for approval. Once approved there *will* be an amendment of your result for the affected unit(s) to reflect this.

I would like an Extension to Submission deadline: If you feel that you would benefit from additional time to complete work to compensate for your recognised ECs, an approved EC can allow the removal of a penalty for late submission. A late submission of up to 6 working days would be accepted and marked. Please discuss the closing time for hand in with your tutor. Your Extenuating Circumstances will then be recognised when the Exam Board meets and will be included in your final results.

**I would like submit during the Summer Retrieval Submission Period:** If you are unable to submit during the extension period your Extenuating Circumstances will be recognised when the Exam Board meets and the outcome of an uncapped retrieval will be included in your results.

*We advise students to aim to have work completed and submitted before their deadlines. Having work outstanding after an assessment deadline has passed could impact on a student's ability to focus on their remaining units and assignments. Having additional time to submit work for one unit as the result of a successful Extenuating Circumstances application would not be acceptable grounds for a further EC submission for another Module or assignment.*

### Extenuating Circumstances Evidence Guidance

Please note that, if you are providing evidence from a medical practitioner, the evidence must clearly relate to the period of assessment for which you are claiming. Medical practitioners should be registered with the General Medical Council (GMC) and a list is available at <http://www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/register/LRMP.asp> This guidance document can be taken to a registered medical practitioner to explain the evidence requirements

If you are providing evidence from the HE Student Support, or an external counsellor, the evidence must relate to the period of assessment for which you are claiming and it must clearly demonstrate that you attended more than one counselling session prior to the assessment deadline.

Extenuating Circumstance	Examples of the type of evidence that are likely to support an EC request
<b>Bereavement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An obituary; order of service; death certificate; legal or medical letters; letter from undertaker.</li> <li>• The EC application must also state the student's relationship to the deceased. It is unlikely that further professional evidence detailing the effects on the student will be required.</li> </ul>
<b>A serious short-term illness, accident or mental health crisis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter from a health professional such as a GP, psychiatrist or mental health counsellor confirming the diagnosis and stating an opinion as to the nature and duration of any impact on the student; medical certificate; prescription; hospital admissions record; photographs of injuries (ideally identifying the student with the photograph).</li> <li>• Since evidence such as a photograph, prescription or admissions record, does not necessarily specify the negative affect on the student's ability to complete their assessment(s), where possible and relevant, evidence from a suitable health professional detailing these effects should also be submitted. Photographic evidence must clearly show that the circumstance relates to the student and be accompanied by additional evidence.</li> <li>• Any evidence that only records the student's self-reporting of the health problems will be normally deemed insufficient.</li> </ul>
<b>Unforeseen recent illness of dependents or close family members</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical certificate or GP's letter relating to the dependent/family member confirming the recent sudden or severe nature of the illness. If this evidence does not also confirm the impact on the student, then independent professional third party evidence should also be submitted.</li> </ul>
<b>A long-term health condition worsening</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical certificate, GP's letter, statement from a registered mental health practitioner or a member of the institution's Student Support Services reporting the specific deterioration or sudden change and the time period it applies to. The evidence should refer to how the change in conditions has impacted on the student. This may be provided in advance of a student's examinations and could apply to all of them in any examination period.</li> <li>• Evidence simply confirming the long-term condition without mentioning the recent deterioration will be normally deemed insufficient.</li> </ul>
<b>Long-term health condition where reasonable adjustments are not yet in place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter or e-mail from the institution's Student Support Services (or equivalent) confirming that the delay in support was beyond the student's control.</li> </ul>



<b>Victim of a serious crime</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Police crime number, legal letters, crime report from the police or other investigating authority; an insurance claim.</li> <li>Since such evidence does not refer to the impact of the event on the student, further evidence may also be required for ECs claimed to have affected the student <i>for more than a week</i>.</li> <li>Claims relating to injuries or trauma suffered as a result of a motor traffic accident would normally be considered as a medical circumstance and require suitable medical evidence as outlined above.</li> </ul>
<b>Legal proceedings requiring court attendance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter from a solicitor/legal officer or official court communication.</li> </ul>
<b>Representative participation in a national or international cultural or sports event</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal notification from the relevant official body or bodies involved. Although independent professional third party evidence outlining the impact on the student's preparation and completion of the assessment may be supplied, it is likely that impact on the student may be reasonably inferred.</li> </ul>
<b>Delay in starting off or breakdown of placement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter or e-mail from the Department Manager of placement, Placement Mentor or Human Resources confirming that the delay in starting was beyond the student's control e.g. External References have not been returned</li> <li>In the event of a breakdown in placement evidence will be required to confirm this was due to the placement institution and not the student e.g. notification of termination of placement</li> <li>A letter from the Programme Lead confirming a plan is in place to support the student in completing the required hours or observations is required for all EC's relating to placement</li> </ul>
<b>Exceptional and unforeseeable transport difficulties</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of a major transportation incident from a relevant and appropriate source (including media reports). Evidence will also need to demonstrate that the student was both affected and that there was no reasonable means of foreseeing or overcoming the difficulties.</li> </ul>
<b>Significant adverse recent personal/family circumstances</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Independent professional third party evidence describing the circumstances, the time period affected and the impact on the student. Where this is not possible, sufficient detail should be submitted so that the likely effects can be reasonably inferred.</li> </ul>
<b>Technical Circumstances – failure attributable to the institution's systems at the point of submission of coursework or during an event assessment such as an Observation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Screen shot of the submission in progress, a screen shot of a formal message published by the institution's IT Services website advising of a systems failure or an email from IT Services responding to the problems encountered.</li> </ul>