

## Regulations Governing Extension of Assessment Deadlines and Consideration of Extenuating Circumstances

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#### 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 All assignments have hand in dates set in advance and published in the module guide. It is a student's responsibility to meet the deadlines. If the assignment is not submitted on time the work will be failed. However the University recognises that from time to time circumstances may occur which are exceptional, beyond the student's control, and which may affect their assessments. These Regulations detail how the University manage such circumstances.
- 1.2 In all cases it is the student's responsibility to present to the University supporting evidence to justify their claim.
- 1.3 Any student that is in difficulty should always contact their Programme Leader/Manager (or in the case of a student studying in a partner organisation the Assistant Programme Leader in that institution) and inform them of their concerns and seek advice about asking for an extension or applying for Extenuating Circumstances.
- 1.4 In the case of a student, studying at a collaborative partner including those overseas, it is the University rather than the institution in which they are studying that has the authority to grant any of these possible courses or action other than where explicitly delegated below, although the partner institution will be involved and will be consulted as they will know the details of the case.
- 1.5 The University has well-established procedures to manage the needs of disabled students in relation to assessment. The extension and extenuating circumstances procedures outlined in this document do not over-ride those other procedures (e.g. a reasonable adjustment might be agreed in the case of disability which allows an extension of an assessment which differs from the standard, or which may vary from assessment to assessment. The provisions in this procedure for a 72 hour limit on extensions would be disregarded in this case, and the student would not need to apply for an extension under this procedure). Where a disability has worsened and is having an impact beyond that for which reasonable adjustments have already been made, then the student should be referred to Disability Support for further assessment.

#### 2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 An **extension** is where a student applies for a brief extension to the hand-in deadline for a piece of work. The extension can be for no more than 72 hours, and must be agreed by the Module Leader. In the absence of the Module Leader the Programme

Leader/Manager can agree on an extension. In partner institutions this must be agreed by the Module/Programme/Centre Leader (Model A) or the Assistant Programme Leader (Models B-D), following these University guidelines, and consulting with the University Programme Leader if necessary. In the event of compelling extenuating circumstances, which impact a full cohort, the Module Leader can grant a cohort extension up to a maximum of three weeks. For partner institutions this must be agreed by the University Module/Programme/Centre Leader.

- 2.2 **Extenuating Circumstances** are exceptional circumstances, outside your control, that have prevented you from either demonstrating or acquiring the skills, knowledge, competencies required to meet the learning outcomes associated with an assessment that contributes to the qualification for which you are studying.

Examples of Extenuating Circumstances might include bereavement, serious short-term illness or accident (for example, something that in employment would have led to absence on sick leave), evidenced worsening of a long term health condition, or significant adverse family or personal circumstances.

Examples of what would not be considered as Extenuating Circumstances are claims of medical condition without reasonable evidence, or with retrospective medical evidence i.e. a doctor's note which states that the student was seen (after the illness occurred) and declared they had previously been ill, a long-term health condition for which the student is already receiving reasonable adjustments and which was not changed in severity or impact, minor illness or ailment, which in a work situation would be unlikely to lead to absence from work, poor practice (for example, failing to keep back-ups of documents), holidays and financial issues, or where there is a reasonable case that the circumstances were foreseeable and preventable.

Any student that presents themselves at an examination and takes that examination, or who submits a piece of coursework, or attends and takes part in a presentation, practical session, or any other form of assessment cannot then put in a later request for Extenuating Circumstances. They will be deeming themselves "Fit to Sit" if they thereby engage in the assessment and no allowance will be made for any difficulties they later wish to claim affected their results. Only in extreme situations where illness occurred during an examination or presentation will any consideration be given and only then if this has been reported at the time to the invigilator or presentation examiner.

Applications for Extenuating Circumstances after the relevant assessment board has met will not be considered. If exceptional conditions exist which justify a late application, taking into account the "Fit to Sit" regulation this must be dealt with via the University's Academic Appeals Procedure.

Note to students on medical and similar evidence: If you wish to submit evidence from a doctor or other professional (e.g. counsellor, physiotherapist etc.) in relation to a claim for extenuating circumstances or extension, you should be aware that this will be given only on the basis of that person's professional judgement. This means that if the person giving evidence does not believe that he or she can reliably provide this evidence (e.g. a doctor cannot retrospectively certify an illness you had the week before which has now gone), this judgement must be accepted and the University will not support students claiming that they "need" such evidence to comply with University procedures.

### 3 LEAVE OF ABSENCE

- 3.1 In some instances it will be more appropriate for a student who is experiencing difficulties completing the work of all the modules on a programme to take a **Leave of Absence**. This is an agreement between the University and the student that they will suspend their studies for a given period of time. If a student considers that their circumstances are so severe that they need to take a break in their studies then they should put in writing to the Programme Leader/Manager at the University the request and supply evidence to support this. Before considering taking a Leave of Absence, careful consideration should be given to the consequences and future difficulties that this may cause, such as a lack of continuity, or pressure on time at a latter stage or the financial and fees implications. Leave of Absence is governed by a separate University procedure which can be found at <https://my.sunderland.ac.uk/display/AQH/Leave+of+Absence>.

### 4 EXTENSIONS

- 4.1 The Module Leader has the authority to grant an extension to the deadline for the submission of an assignment of up to 72 hours provided they are satisfied that a genuine reason exists. In the absence of the Module Leader the Programme Leader/Manager has the authority to make the decision. Students must seek an extension from the Module Leader and only refer to the Programme Leader in the absence of the Module Leader. The Programme Leader/Manager will refer any requests to the Module Leader when the Module Leader is available.
- 4.2 All students should know clearly from the module guide what is to be submitted and when assignments are to be handed in. It is recognised that there will be occasions when there is a good reason for agreeing to a short extension. If the situation warrants more than just a short period of time beyond the published hand-in date the student should use the Extenuating Circumstances procedure. If it is known in advance that completion of the work in all modules taken will not realistically be possible before the normal assessment point the student should discuss the possibility of taking a Leave of Absence.
- 4.3 The Module Leader has the authority to grant an extension to the deadline for the submission of an assignment, up to three weeks from the original deadline for a full cohort provided they are satisfied that the extenuating circumstances have impacted the full cohort. The Module Leader must inform the Programme Leader, the Chair of the Professional Doctorate Studies Board, the Assessment Board Chair and the Assessment Board Officer of extensions which would result in the submission being too late for consideration at the scheduled Assessment Board. If the Module Leader believes, the situation warrants more than an extension of three weeks and the situation is exceptional and compelling, the Module Leader should seek approval from the Dean/Deputy Dean/Head of School (Head of University of Sunderland in London or Head of University in Hong Kong or member of the Senior Management team acting as or on the Head's nomination for students studying there) and the Academic Registrar.

#### 4.4 PRINCIPLES (EXTENSIONS)

- 4.4.1 The maximum time given for an extension should be three days (72 hours), which includes weekends and bank holidays (though see note in 1.5 on students with disabilities). The maximum time given for a cohort extension should be three weeks, which includes weekends and bank holidays.(please refer to 4.3 for exceptions);

- 4.4.2 It must be possible to apply the same principles to all students registered on the module. It must not disadvantage other students, or unduly advantage the student who is applying for the extension;
- 4.4.3 There must be “good reason” for considering it appropriate to grant an extension, such as circumstances that are exceptional, and not foreseeable or preventable. Pressure of work, computer breakdown, loss of disk, etc., would not be regarded as examples of good reason;
- 4.4.4 It must be possible for staff to mark the work before the assessment board meets or samples are sent to the external examiner. In the case of a cohort extension for partner institutions it is the Module Leader’s responsibility to inform Programme Support, Academic Registry so that the schedules can be updated and the partner institutions can be advised accordingly;
- 4.4.5 Only one extension for any module t will be given (though see note 1.5 on students with disabilities as above); There should be no additional extension to an already granted extension; It is the student’s responsibility to disclose any previously agreed extensions when seeking an extension from the Programme Leader/Manager. If a student does not disclose a previously agreed extension and seeks a further extension, the extension will be discounted and the student will receive a non-submission. The case might also be referred for disciplinary action.
- 4.4.6 The Module Leader is responsible for keeping a note of what has been agreed and why;
- 4.4.7 If it is reasonable, in the Module Leader’s professional view (or the Programme Leader/Manager in the absence of the Module Leader), to grant an extension this should be used in preference to encouraging a student to apply for Extenuating Circumstances, provided there is some certainty that the revised deadline can be met;
- 4.4.8 Examinations are excluded from the extension policy

## **5 EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES**

- 5.1 Where the reason for not being able to complete work and meet the deadline is more serious and far reaching, as outlined in Section 2.2 above, the student may request “Extenuating Circumstances” as outlined in this section of the Regulations. If this is granted then the student would normally be deferred and given a later in hand date. Extenuating Circumstances will not be granted without supporting evidence that the circumstances that where applicable to a timeframe when the work or assignment has been adversely affected. This evidence should be original documentation and accompany the request.
- 5.2 Any student who presents themselves at an examination and takes that examination, or who submits a piece of coursework, or attends and takes part in a presentation, practical session or any other form of assessment cannot then put in a subsequent request for Extenuating Circumstances. The student deems themselves “Fit to Sit” if they thereby engage in the assessment and no allowance will be made for any difficulties they later wish to claim affected their results. Only where unforeseen illness occurred during an examination or presentation will any consideration be given and only then if this has been reported at the time to the invigilator or presentation examiner.

5.3 Each Faculty has Extenuating Circumstances Panel (ECP) which considers all claims for Extenuating Circumstances (see 5.5). For PGRS this is done by Research Degrees Group. The details of any claim will be confidential to the panel. The ECP will consider each claim, and advise the Assessment Board whether:

- a) The documentary evidence supports the claim
- b) The claimed circumstances could have affected the student's performances

The Assessment Board will consider whether the claim is relevant to the assessment period, or to the relevant time prior to an assessment. It is not expected that an Assessment Board would, in the absence of any additional evidence, dispute the findings of the Panel regarding the facts of Extenuating Circumstances, but the Assessment Board has the right to over-rule the advice of the ECP if allowing any Extenuating Circumstance to affect an academic decision would be unreasonable in any way. In such a case, the Assessment Board must ensure that it is (through discussion with Chair or panel member from the ECP) fully aware of all the facts that were presented to the ECP.

#### **5.4 PRINCIPLES (EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES)**

5.4.1 It is the responsibility of the student to report any Extenuating Circumstances which they feel may have affected their performance either prior to or during assessment. In the first instance this should be to the Programme Leader/Manager or the college Assistant Programme Leader.

5.4.2 The ECP form is available (URL to be supplied) which must be used to make an Extenuating Circumstances application and returned to the address listed on the form and not to the Programme Leader/Manager.

5.4.3 An application for Extenuating Circumstances will only be considered if there is supporting evidence. Supporting evidence is likely to be documentation from a professional (Doctor, Counsellor, member of Wellbeing Services etc.) and it is the student's responsibility to see that it is supplied at the time the request for Extenuating Circumstances is made. Evidence can be submitted electronically however the Officer to the panel will request that a selection of evidence is provided in hard copy for authenticity checking. Hard copy evidence will be requested when a student is selected as part of a random sample, or if there are particular concerns about the authenticity of the evidence provided. It is a student's responsibility to ensure they retain hard copy evidence and provide it in a timely manner upon request. Submitting false evidence or a false application for Extenuating Circumstances is an offence under both academic and disciplinary regulations and may lead to expulsion from the University. Students should note that falsifying death certificates is a criminal offence. A student must obtain a GP's note or letter from a Doctor who is not a relative. In exceptional circumstances, the ECP has the discretion to consider a claim where it is not possible for the student to provide evidence.

5.4.4 Faculties/GRS will set deadlines by which applications for Extenuating Circumstances must be submitted and communicate these deadlines to students. Retrospective applications will not be considered unless the student can show their situation was such that they could not reasonably have made the application on time, for example by providing evidence to show that they were medically unable to do so. It would not be considered reasonable to claim that holiday or employment commitments had prevented submission.

- 5.4.5 Before the Assessment Board meets an ECP will sit to consider the application for Extenuating Circumstances, and will make a decision on whether it is granted or not.
- 5.4.6 The Assessment Board will be informed of this decision and will make a judgment on the action to be taken. Normally when an application for Extenuating Circumstances is accepted the assessment decision is a deferral (i.e. the assessment point is delayed until a later date and the full range of marks are available).
- 5.4.7 After the Assessment Board has taken place, the student will be notified of the Board's decision via their online transcript.

## **5.5 FACULTY EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES PANEL AND ASSESSMENT BOARDS**

- 5.5.1 The Dean of each Faculty, Director of Research Degree Programmes and Director of University of Sunderland in London will establish an ECP, having regard to the need to ensure adequate representation of subjects within the Faculty/Campus.
- 5.5.2 The Panel will be Chaired by a relevant member of staff as nominated by the Dean/Director of Research Degree Programmes/Director of University of Sunderland in London and a member of Programme Support/GRS within the Academic Registry will be appointed to act as Officer to the ECP.
- 5.5.3 The dates of meetings of the ECP and associated deadlines, must be clearly communicated to students.
- 5.5.4 Evidence submitted by a student is made available to members of the ECP, and to the relevant Assessment Board. In exceptional circumstances, the Chair of the ECP may decide that evidence needs to be treated as confidential (for example, where the evidence necessarily involves a third party). In this case the Chair will advise the ECP that evidence has been received without presenting that evidence, or by presenting part of the evidence as agreed with the student, but with-holding that which is confidential. Where there are concerns that the nature of the extenuating circumstances impacts/contravenes the requirements of a professional practice course, the details will be shared with the appropriate Health and Conduct/Fitness to Practise panel, evidence will only be shared if a case needs to be progressed and the student will be informed of the referral.
- 5.5.5 If the evidence submitted covers modules taken within another Faculty, the Officer to the ECP will ensure the relevant information is sent to the relevant ECP Officer for the Faculty. It is the Faculty ECP where the modules belongs who makes a decision on whether to accept the Extenuating Circumstances application (not applicable to PGRS as the programme is cross faculty).
- 5.5.6 The Chair of the Assessment Board must ensure that any advised Extenuating Circumstances are reported in the minutes of the Assessment Board, and that the relevant assessments are flagged using the defined University codes.

## **5.6 APPEALS**

- 5.6.1 As outlined above, students are required to submit applications for Extenuating Circumstances in advance of the assessment deadline, and in advance of the relevant ECP and Assessment Board.

- 5.6.2 Any claims made after this point can only be considered via University Academic Appeals process.
- 5.6.3 The only grounds for consideration of Extenuating Circumstances under the Academic Appeals process are:
- a) that there has been material procedural irregularity in the Faculty's management of a claim ;
  - b) or that it can be demonstrated that the ECP and Assessment Board did not consider the case and all supporting evidence;
  - c) or that there is exceptional, compelling and evidenced reason why the student could not submit a claim at the appropriate time.