

Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Operational Process

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Summary

What is this document about?

This policy details the circumstances and processes that should be followed when Extenuating Circumstances may arise within a student's journey.

Who is this for? This policy will be of most interest to students and apprentices studying on Undergraduate and Post Graduate Taught courses levels 3 to 8, staff, collaborative partners, external examiners, apprenticeship employers and professional bodies. It will be of interest to the Office for Students (OfS).

How does the University check this is followed? Academic Registry is responsible for overseeing that the Extenuating Circumstances Policy is applied consistently and fairly across all relevant academic provision. Additionally, External Examiners and End Point Assessment Assessors, as applicable, oversee the quality of every course in the University and also help ensure that the Assessment Regulations are followed.

Who can you contact if you have any queries about this document? If you need further advice or assistance related to these Assessment Regulations, please contact Academic Registry.

These regulations and other related University policies can be found at www.port.ac.uk on the Policies and Standards webpage, including:

- Appeals Procedure
- Change of Status Policy
- Examination and Assessment Regulations
- Fitness to Practice Policy
- Fitness to Study Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Extenuating circumstances (ECs) are short term circumstances that impact a student's ability to complete their assessment by the submission deadline (including 48 hour extension). These circumstances have either substantially impacted on the standard of their work, or prevented the student from completing and submitting their assessment or attending a scheduled examination.
- 1.2 This policy is designed to do four things:
 - a. ensure that students are appropriately supported by their Schools when extenuating circumstances are experienced that impact assessment;
 - b. ensure that all students are treated fairly and equitably, providing students fair opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of learning outcomes;
 - c. outline the responsibilities of students in informing the University of extenuating circumstances which are affecting their performance;
 - d. and protect the academic integrity of courses for all students.
- 1.3 Students will be required to attend or submit varying types of summative assessment whilst on their course. The following are all examples of summative assessment:
 - a. Examination (on campus or remote)
 - b. Written coursework or projects
 - c. In person presentations and oral examinations
 - d. Pre-recorded presentations submitted on-line
 - e. Practical assessments
 - f. Portfolio
 - g. Dissertations
- 1.4 Procedures for ECs normally apply to individual students, although they can apply to groups of students where a piece of group work is involved and one or more members of the group has valid extenuating circumstances. If the EC is in relation to a group assessment, students should include the names of other students affected.
- 1.5 Apprentices who are completing their End Point Assessment (EPA), and require an extension to their live assessment date due to an extenuating circumstance, will be required to refer to their End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO) policy and process which sit outside of this policy. Apprentices can contact their Work Based Tutor for support with contacting their EPAO.
- 1.6 Apart from students registered for the taught phase of their doctorate, postgraduate research students are not required to submit extenuating circumstances applications.

Instead they should discuss the situation with their supervisors, and consider whether interrupting their research is an option - Section 5.4 [Regulations for Research Degrees](#).

- 1.7 If a student attends an exam or submits their assignment on time, they have declared that they are in good health and therefore "fit to sit" and so any extenuating circumstance application for that assessment/s will be invalid.

2. What is meant by Extenuating Circumstances?

- 2.1 Extenuating circumstances (ECs) are short term circumstances that impact a student's ability to complete their assessment by the submission deadline. These circumstances have either substantially impacted the standard of their work, or prevented the student from completing and submitting their assessment. Any circumstances where appropriate adjustments have already been made by the University and where there is no evidence of a worsening of the condition will not be seen as a valid EC application.
- 2.2 The University considers the following to be extenuating circumstances that may impact a student's ability to submit their assessment by their required deadline. While examples can be provided, it is not possible to produce an exhaustive list, as every student's situation is unique. Decisions should be based on the criteria below whilst using sound judgement, ensuring fairness, and taking a student-centric approach.

a. **Serious illness or injury (less than seven days)**

What's Covered:

Physical or mental health issue that significantly impair academic performance and focus
Sudden or acute illness or injury, not long-term unless newly diagnosed or deteriorated
Unplanned or planned hospitalisation

What's Not Covered, for example:

Long-standing conditions without recent worsening
Minor ailments, such as colds or mild flu
A condition which has not affected performance or focus
Assessment-related stress, which is not diagnosed as an illness
An illness occurring after an examination/in-class test or the deadline for submission of coursework

b. **Bereavement**

What's Covered, for example

Death of a close family member or someone with a significant personal relationship

c. **A Traumatic Event**

What's Covered, for example:

Victim of crime, serious incident, domestic abuse

Physical or sexual assault

Witnessing a violent act or involved in a major incident

Accident or emergencies (e.g. car crash on the day of assessment)

What's Not Covered, for example:

Unreported minor thefts

Minor incidents not supported by policy or medical documentation

Minor domestic mishaps or relationship quarrels/issues

d. **Pre-Booked Holidays Prior to Commencing University**

What's Covered, for example:

Holidays within term-time or assessment periods that had been booked before your first registration on the course.

What's Not Covered, for example:

Any travel booked after first registration, even if long-planned

Voluntary travel that overlaps with exams or submission dates

Attendance at family or other celebrations including marriages

f. **Religious observance for Time Specific Events**

What's Covered, for example:

Events that take place over a restricted time period, such as Eid ul Fitr, Shavuot, Vaisakhi and Shivaratri

Mandatory fasting that has an unexpected impact on your health

Travel restrictions due to mandatory observance

What's Not Covered, for example:

General religious preference with no clear conflict

Optional events that do not interfere with academic obligations

Religious observance which spans a significant period of time and where day-to-day activities are expected to continue as normal

g. Extended physical or mental illness or injury (more than 5 working days)

What's covered, for example:

Physical or mental health issue that significantly impair academic performance and focus

Newly diagnosed or deteriorated medical condition

Unplanned or planned hospitalisation

Mental health deterioration

Deterioration of existing medical matter

What's Not Covered, for example:

Long-standing conditions without recent worsening

Minor ailments, such as colds or mild flu

A condition which has not affected performance or focus

h. Unavoidable household or financial problems

What's covered, for example:

Unavoidable medical emergency for a pet, where the animal requires immediate veterinary attention

Unexpected emergencies in the home such as burst water pipes, gas leakages, fire, or flood which require immediate attention

Unavoidable official evacuation orders from your home

A burglary which requires immediate attention to engage with the police, and secure your home

What's Not Covered, for example:

General maintenance appointments for gas boilers, blocked sinks, broadband, wifi etc

Planned gas/electric/water metre readings

Planned building/decorating work

Planned landlord visits

Delivery of large household items such as fridges, washing machines, sofas etc

Planned veterinary appointments

House moves

Renovations

Requirement to work

Unpaid tuition fees

i. **Carer problems (carer of a dependent child or adult, or requiring own care support)**

What's covered, for example:

Unavoidable illness or medical emergency that affects your dependent

Unavoidable unexpected closure of your dependent's nursery/school/care centre etc

Unavoidable illness or medical emergency that affects your carer's ability to support you

What's Not Covered, for example:

Lack of cover preparation for your dependent during planned nursery/school/care centre closures eg a school half term or a school in-service training (inset) day

Lack of cover preparation for your carer's planned annual leave

j. **Absence arising from maternity, paternity, shared or adoption appointments**

What's covered, for example:

Appointments that can not be rescheduled relating to pregnancy

Appointments that can not be rescheduled relating to adoption

What's Not Covered, for example:

Maternity and/or paternity leave

Rescheduleable appointments

k. **Court Attendance**

What's covered, for example:

Jury Service (where deferral has been declined)

Attendance at Court or a Tribunal as a witness

Defendant or plaintiff required to attend Court

What's Not Covered, for example:

Attending court as a part of the Viewing Gallery

l. Active Exercise of Citizenship

What's covered, for example:

Unanticipated and/or non-negotiable commitment to duties associated with an elected office

Sudden or unexpected deployment (Armed or Reserve Forces)

What's Not Covered, for example:

Non mandatory events or duties

Mandatory Military Service

m. Representing County or Country at Sport

What's covered, for example:

Selection to represent your country or county at sporting events

What's Not Covered, for example:

Local team events or tournaments

University team events

n. Unforeseen Major Transport Difficulties

What's covered, for example:

Rail strikes/cancellation of service at short notice

Road traffic accidents impacting major routes to the assessment location

Personal transport breakdowns enroute to assessment

What's Not Covered, for example:

Missed transportation due to insufficient planning

Known transport issue that could have been planned for in advance

This list is not exhaustive and other circumstances are considered appropriate provided the circumstances meet the definition in 2.1. In some cases approval by the Academic Registrar may be required.

- 2.3 See Annex 1 for information about evidence requirements. If you are unable to provide evidence, you must clearly explain why you are unable to do so. This explanation will be reviewed and a decision will be made as to whether the EC can be approved without the required evidence.
- 2.4 Students that attend and/or submit their assessment inline with the assessment deadline are integrating that they are in good health and therefore fit to complete their assessment. Where students have completed and submitted their assessment, an EC application will not be approved.

3. Students with Disabilities or Specific Learning Difference

- 3.1 Extenuating circumstances are short term, unforeseen issues that may affect students' assessments. This can include an exacerbation of a long term condition - for example sudden flare-up of symptoms.
- 3.2 A Disability, or Specific Learning Difference would normally be supported through 'reasonable adjustments' to your assessments, rather than extenuating circumstances. Please refer to the University's Reasonable Adjustment Policy for more information. The University's [Disability Advice](#) can offer confidential advice and guidance on support available to help students manage their study effectively. If they are too unwell to study, the [fitness to study policy](#) and process should be referred to, to enable students to access support and explore options for a suspension in their studies.

4. Support services available to students

- 4.1 The University offers support and guidance for students who are facing difficult circumstances, whether or not they qualify as an 'exceptional circumstance' under this policy. Support is available from your Student Support Adviser, as well as your Personal Academic Tutor and across the University, including:
 - a) [Student Wellbeing](#)
 - b) [Student Money](#)
 - c) [Student Accommodation advice](#)
 - d) [Disability Advice](#)
 - e) [Academic Skills Support](#)
 - f) [International Student Advice](#)
 - g) [Chaplaincy](#)

Staff should, as appropriate, encourage students to consult relevant support services and/or a medical practitioner.

5. Student Visa Holders

- 5.1 Students studying on a Student Visa need to be mindful that an approved Extenuating Circumstances application, in particular when exams are deferred, may affect the end date of when they can complete their course. This could mean that they could finish their course after their visa has expired. Students should always keep track of their visa's expiry date, and also their study cap allowance, and seek guidance on their visa conditions from the [International Student Advice Team](#).

6. Extenuating Circumstances Process

6.1 How to apply for Extenuating Circumstances

Students can find the Extenuating Circumstances Application Form via [Student View](#). Students are able to apply and view the status of their claim at any time via the "My Extenuating Circumstances" page. Students are responsible for submitting their own Extenuating Circumstances application. If a student finds themselves in a situation where they are unable to submit their own application, students should contact their Student Success Adviser, Personal Academic Tutor or their Course Leader who will be able to send an application via Hornbill.

Students will be asked to identify if the Extenuating Circumstances affected an assessment involving group work and provide names of the students contained within the group to allow for quick and effective support for all students within the group.

Please refer to the [Extenuating Circumstances](#) page for further details on how to apply.

6.2 After an Extenuating Circumstances Application has been submitted

After submission of an Extenuating Circumstances application, an automated email will confirm receipt of the application. A decision will be made within 10 working days from the date of submission. Where there is a scheduled University closure (Christmas and Bank Holidays), these days will not be counted as working days, therefore longer approvals should be expected. Where students find that the assessment date is within these 10 working days they should continue to prepare for the assessment until the EC application has been approved. Students should refer to sections 1.7 and 4.1 of this policy if they require additional support during their EC application period or have longer term concerns that may be considered under the University's [Fitness to Study Policy](#).

6.3 Extenuating Circumstances that are found to be valid

Students that have a valid Extenuating Circumstance and have submitted their assessment within 10 working days of the original assessment deadline, will receive full marks with no late penalty. If students can not submit their work within the 10 day extended deadline, exam boards will be made aware of their Extenuating Circumstance claim and be considered when making decisions about their assessment outcomes. Information regarding further attempts and deferrals in relation to assessment can be found in the [Assessment Regulations for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Courses](#).

6.4 Extenuating Circumstances that are found to be invalid

If students have their Extenuating Circumstances application declined, they will be given reasons for the decline decision and be expected to submit or attend their assessment as

planned. If the declined application is due to lack of evidence, students may apply for an EC again as long as they are within the deadline period and evidence is supplied in line with Annex A of this policy. Extenuating Circumstance deadlines can be found on the [Extenuating Circumstances](#) webpage.

If students who have had their Extenuating Circumstance declined do not complete their assessment, a non submission mark will be given for that assessment. Students who submit their assessment late, but within 10 working days of their assessment date will be marked, but this mark will be limited to the module pass mark as detailed within the [Assessment Regulations for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Courses](#).

Students are reminded that the University can provide support to students at any stage during the EC application process as outlined in section 4 of this policy.

7. Extenuating Circumstances Application Deadlines

- 7.1 Deadlines for applying for an EC can be found on the [Extenuating Circumstances](#) webpage in line with the assessment periods for the current academic year.

8 Sharing Student Data with Student Services

- 8.1 In filling in an Extenuating Circumstances application, students should understand that the University will collect, use and hold their personal data in line with the relevant data protection legislation (the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation - GDPR).
- 8.2 Where an Extenuating Circumstance application may raise concerns around a student's health and wellbeing, the person(s)/committee responsible for reviewing the application may contact the Student Services to ensure students are appropriately supported.

Annex 1 - types of evidence

Students should be able to provide evidence as suggested in the table below. If the supporting evidence is in a language other than English, students must provide a translated copy.

The evidence must be relevant to the time period of when the Extenuating Circumstance occurred.

Photographic and digital evidence of a distressing nature e.g physical injuries will not be accepted.

Criteria	Type of Evidence
Serious illness or injury (less than seven days)	No evidence is required
Bereavement	No evidence is required
A Traumatic Event	<p>We understand how difficult the situation will be, however we hope that you have been able to speak with a professional such as a police officer who can provide you with a police incident report and a crime reference number, or a doctor or counsellor who can provide you with a supporting statement regarding the event.</p> <p>You may find it easier instead to discuss your situation with a member of University staff such as a Student Success Adviser, a Personal Academic Tutor or someone from the Student Services, who can provide a brief statement to support your Extenuating Circumstances application</p>
Pre-Booked Holidays Prior to Commencing University	Booking confirmation evidencing booking was made prior to University start date
Religious observance for Time Specific Events	Supportive statement from relevant faith leader
Extended physical or mental illness or injury (more than 5 working days)	<p>Official documentation that could include doctor's sick/fit note, scanned copy of prescription (detailing date prescribed), discharge letter from hospital.</p> <p>For deterioration of an existing medical matter, evidence of chronic physical or mental condition or disability required for first occurrence.</p>
Unavoidable Household problems	Email or scanned letter from your landlord/letting agency confirming what has happened, or appointments from water companies, plumbers, boiler services, energy companies,

	<p>announcements from environmental agencies, emergency services (e.g. fire) etc.</p> <p>Evidence that you have had to engage with a professional service such as a veterinary practice, solicitors, insurance companies or police crime scene officers</p>
Carer problems	Official documentation that could include a sick/fit note of the dependent or yourself, discharge letter from hospital etc. or official correspondence in the form of an email or scanned letter from a nursery, school, care centre/home, social services, care agencies etc
Appointments relating to maternity/paternity/adoption	Official correspondence - email or scanned letter from a doctor, adoption agency, social services etc
Court Attendance	Official correspondence - email or scanned letter eg confirming the court summons
Active Exercise of Citizenship	Official correspondence - email or scanned letter signed by your line manager, commanding officer or supervisor confirming your commitment
Representing County or Country at Sport	Official correspondence - email or scanned letter - signed by your official trainer or your sporting association confirming the date/s of the sporting event/s you are attending.
Unforeseen Major Transport Difficulties	Corroborative evidence from a relevant and appropriate source eg rail companies, airlines or media news coverage about the transport situation. If your car broke down - evidence of contact with a road service company or garage.