

Extenuating Circumstances Procedure (HE)

Procedure number:	CQ238a	Owner (Job Title):	Head of Department UCN
Location on SharePoint:	Policies and Procedures/Higher Education		
EIA Meeting Date:		EIA Required:	No
Date of Latest Review:	June 2024		
External Web Site appropriate:	Yes		
Linked policies/College documents (if appropriate):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality, Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy • Course Review Board records 		
Impacts:	Students		

This procedure should be used in conjunction with the Extenuating Circumstances Process (HE) in Annex A.

1. Introduction

All students have a responsibility to manage their learning during their studies. To meet the assessment requirements, students will need to manage their workload to ensure that they meet assessment deadlines.

It is recognised that occasionally a student may encounter adverse circumstances beyond their control which may prevent them from meeting a set deadline or from performing at their expected level of ability.

This procedure explains:

1. Examples that may be considered as ‘extenuating’ circumstances.
2. Procedure for applying for extenuating circumstances.
3. Outcomes for requests for extenuating circumstances.
4. How to appeal the outcome of a request.
5. Monitoring of extenuating circumstances.

2. Examples of extenuating circumstances

1. Bereavement: death of a close relative or partner which would fall into the permitted compassionate leave of absence in employment.
2. Serious short-term illness or accident.
3. Competitor, coach or referee participating in a significant national or international sporting event or competition.
4. Victim of crime.
5. Deterioration or complication of a long term physical or mental health condition or disability.
6. Unexpected occurrence of a serious family or work circumstance.
7. Complications in pregnancy or premature labour.
8. Unavoidable serious transport difficulties.
9. Unscheduled technical difficulties affecting the College intranet, VLE or e-portfolio used for submission.
10. Unexpected childcare or care crisis.

This list is not exhaustive but provides an indication of the seriousness of the circumstances that will be considered.

3. Circumstances that cannot be considered under this procedure

1. Medical circumstances that cannot be substantiated, e.g. no medical note, no evidence of hospital admission, doctors note produced after the period

of illness.

2. Any medical, health or disability related condition where adjustments for extenuating circumstances have already been made.
3. Circumstances that could be foreseen or prevented.
4. Minor illness or ailment which would not normally lead to absence.
5. Paid employment except for unforeseen, last minute, unusual employer demands e.g. to travel abroad for employment.
6. Transport problems
7. Holidays
8. Financial issues
9. Personal computer/printer/software problems.
10. Poor working practice e.g. failure to back up electronic documents.
11. Claim of being unaware of the submission date, time, format of assessment submission.
12. Poor time management in addressing the requirements of the assignment/assessment.
13. Complaints about the delivery of the unit/course as these should be addressed through the Complaints Procedure.
14. Stress or panic attacks related to formal assessment that have not been diagnosed or disclosed as a condition or illness requiring additional arrangements prior to the assessment / exam.

4. Jury Service

Students who receive a summons to attend jury service during the academic year are advised to request a deferral. This is to avoid missing essential teaching and assessment activities and avoid impacting other students where group activities are required.

If a deferral is not approved, the College will support students in carrying out their civic duties. Students should request a temporary leave of absence in writing, giving the dates of the jury service. This should be submitted to the Course/Programme Leader. If the jury service is expected to extend beyond the standard three weeks, the student should discuss the best approach to managing their absence with their Course Leader/Programme and Head of Department UCN.

5. Procedure for applying for extenuating circumstances

1. The student should notify the Course/Programme Leader at the earliest opportunity of any circumstance that will affect the completion of assessments.
2. The student should complete an extenuating circumstance form (Appendix B). A student's extenuating circumstances may affect more than one assessment, practical assessment or examination and therefore several requests for extension or deferral may be submitted on the same form.
3. To defer an assessment, test or exam, the student should be aware that many examinations are set by an external awarding body who will identify if another opportunity is available. The available opportunity could fall into the next academic year. Awarding bodies may consider individual circumstances and early advice should be sought from the Course/Programme Leader.
4. The extenuating circumstances form and supporting evidence must be submitted to the Course/Programme Leader at least five working days prior to the event requiring extension or deferral. Submission of the form does not automatically grant the requested extension or deferral.
5. Within five working days of the request being submitted, the Head of Department UCN and the Course/Programme Leader will hold an Extenuating Circumstances Board and consider the request and supporting evidence.
6. Within two working days of the Board's decision, the student will be informed in writing of the outcome of their request.
7. The Course/Programme Leader will inform the external examiner of all applications for extenuating circumstances and their outcomes.

6. Reporting extenuating circumstances where the circumstance occurs at the point of assignment submission, exam or practical assessment

Where the extenuating circumstance occurs on the date of the assignment submission, exam or practical assessment, the extenuating circumstance the form and supporting evidence may be submitted up to five working days after the submission deadline, exam or practical assessment.

The Extenuating Circumstances Board may request that the student submits a draft of the work completed towards the assessment where an extension to a submission deadline is requested. This will enable the examination board to make an informed decision on any revision of the submission deadline.

7. Exceptions to the procedure for reporting extenuating circumstances and requesting extension or deferral

In certain situations, a student may be unable to submit the extenuating

circumstances form within five working days, e.g., they are suffering from the medical, emotional or physical impact of a serious event without access to support to submit the required documentation. In such circumstances, they should notify the Course/Programme Leader and submit the extenuating circumstances form at the earliest opportunity and provide the reasons for the delay in the submission.

Some extenuating circumstances present challenges that may require the student to take leave of absence for a period. A break in study of up to three weeks may be requested using the extenuating circumstances form and should also request extension or deferral for any assessments or examinations that will be affected. Longer periods of absence will be considered but are likely to lead to an equivalent deferred study period. A student intending to apply for a longer break in study should check if there are any implications for the arrangements in place for tuition fees, awarding body registration fees or visa limitations.

Requests for breaks in study will be considered at an Extenuating Circumstances Board in the same manner as requests for extension or deferral.

8. Outcomes of requests for extenuating circumstances

Extension of the deadline for an assignment or coursework approved

Confirmation of the revised deadline which will be in accordance with the regulations of the awarding body. In most cases a revised deadline will be a maximum of 14 calendar days.

Deferral approved for practical assessment

The Course/Programme Leader will confirm the approved deferral and will give the date of the revised assessment.

Deferral approved for a formal examination

This can only be approved for the first sitting of an exam. The revised opportunity is likely to be a formal resit exam. The student will be advised that they are unlikely to have a further re-sit opportunity unless the awarding body is able to support this.

Approval of a break in study

The agreement for the break in study will be defined, normally for a period up to 15 working days. Any associated approved extensions or deferrals will be notified at the same time.

Request for extension, deferral or break in study rejected

The reason for rejecting the request will be given:

1. Failure to submit supporting evidence.
2. Insufficient or unsuitable evidence to substantiate the extenuating circumstances.

- Failure to meet an agreed extension to provide supporting evidence.

9. Appeals

Students may appeal the outcome of their request for extension, deferral or a break in study if:

- The Extenuating Circumstances Board failed to follow the procedures outlined in this document.
- The student believes that the evidence provided has not been interpreted correctly by the Extenuating Circumstances Board.

A student may not appeal if they have previously been granted an extension, deferral or break in study for the same piece of work and have not kept to the agreed arrangement.

The appeal should be submitted in writing to the Head of Department UCN within 10 working days of the date of the notification letter.

The appeal request should state clearly the reason for the appeal and:

- Why they think the request for extension, deferral or a break in study was not reviewed in line with the procedures or
- Identify the evidence that they feel has been incorrectly interpreted and provide information to clarify the evidence.

Appeals will be conducted by the Head of Department Quality & Essential Skills or by an appointed Manager where this enables a timely response.

The appeal will consider the appeal statement, the original request for extenuating circumstances, extension, deferral or break in study and the supporting evidence, the record of the Extenuating Circumstances Board and their conclusion.

Outcomes of an appeal may be:

- Appeal upheld:** The student will be notified in writing that their appeal has been upheld. The student will also be notified that the internal appeals procedure has been concluded and should the student remain dissatisfied in any way with the process that they may request a Completion of Procedures (COP) letter to take their concerns forwards to the office of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.
- Appeal not upheld:** The student will be notified of the outcome in writing. The reason will be given explaining why the appeal was not upheld. A COP letter will be provided to inform the student of the possibility of referring to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. Further information on the Office of the Independent Adjudicator may be found on the website: www.oliahe.org.uk

10. Monitoring of extenuating circumstances

A copy of the notification letter, request for extenuating circumstances and supporting evidence will be stored by the Head of Department UCN.

Where a request is rejected, a COP letter will be issued with the notification and reasons. This will be stored by the Head of Department UCN.

To be recorded in Course Review Board minutes:

1. The number and types of requests made due to extenuating circumstances.
2. Whether the requests were upheld or rejected.
3. Any appeals and their outcomes.
4. The number of COP letters issued.

Appendix A

Extenuating circumstances Process (HE)

Introduction

The aim of this process is to ensure students are not disadvantaged by the impact of short term, unexpected circumstances and to make clear the examples of adverse factors that shall be considered as extenuating circumstances by Newbury College or University Centre Newbury (UCN).

This process applies to all higher education students (including higher and degree apprentices). This process supports the Extenuating Circumstances Procedure.

Awarding bodies publish guidelines for assessment and these must be followed in the first instance.

1. Definition of extenuating circumstances

The College defines extenuating circumstances as ‘short term, exceptional circumstances, outside the control of the student, which prevent them from sitting or submitting an assessment on the specified deadline’.

The circumstances may relate to the health, personal life or employment of a student and are of sufficient seriousness that they prevent the student from attending, completing or submitting the assessment on time.

The circumstances are expected to be:

1. Unavoidable: the student could not have taken steps to prevent or avoid the event or circumstance.
2. Unforeseen: the student could not know of, nor anticipate, the event.

Examples of valid and invalid extenuating circumstances can be found in the Extenuating Circumstances Procedure.

2. Circumstances considered under this process

The process is intended to cover short term adverse circumstances, beyond a student’s direct control, which prevent them from completing work to a deadline, or to their customary standard of achievement. In these circumstances, the process enables students to request an extension to the deadline for submission of a piece of work, or to defer a formal exam or a practical assessment.

Students experiencing longer term adverse circumstances should speak with their Course Leader.

In some cases, it may be more appropriate for students to apply to consider a break in their studies and they should speak with their Course Leader.

3. Evidence

Valid evidence must be submitted to support applications for extenuating circumstances. Evidence should come from independent third-party authorities (e.g., medical professionals, police, counsellors, lawyers).

If evidence is of a highly personal or sensitive nature, support may be requested from the College Wellbeing Mentor or Safeguarding Officer who will provide guidance on how to present the evidence.

Students are advised to keep copies of all documentation which they submit.

4. Extenuating Circumstances Procedures

The procedure for submitting an Extenuating Circumstances application is detailed in the Extenuating Circumstances Procedure. The Procedure includes examples of valid and invalid extenuating circumstances and covers suggested sources of evidence, late applications, outcomes and appeals.

5. Linked policies, procedures and College documents

This process is linked to the following:

- Quality, Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy
- Course Review Board records
- Extenuating Circumstances Procedure

Appendix B

Extenuating Circumstances Request Form

This form must be completed for all requests for extension, deferral or a break in study due to extenuating circumstances. A different format may be requested for accessibility. Support to present evidence of a sensitive or confidential nature may be obtained from the Wellbeing Mentor or Safeguarding Officer. The Extenuating Circumstances Process should be referred to before completing this form.

Part 1: Your Details

Name (Print)		Student Number	
Course title and year of study			

Part 2: Assessment, Practical assessment or examination affected.

Unit number	Unit name	Assessment ,e.g. assignment, exam, presentation etc.	Date of assessment

Continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

Part 3: Details of the extenuating circumstances, e.g. what happened and when and how this affected your work.

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Part 4: List supporting evidence submitted

Part 5: Reason for late submission of request if after the assessment deadline / exam

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Student signature		Date submitted	
Course/Programme Leader signature		Date of receipt	

Submit this form and your supporting evidence to your Course/Programme Leader.