Guidance for Students on Extenuating Circumstances

1. Introduction

   a. This guidance applies to students who are currently enrolled on a programme of study offered directly by us or at selected partner organisations.
   b. You must make sure you organise your time so that you can complete your assessments by the deadline set and be prepared for your exam.
   c. You need to build in some extra time in case anything does not go according to plan.
   d. You must also back up your work in case your computer fails or you lose data/files.

2. What are extenuating circumstances?

   a. Extenuating circumstances (ECs) are situations that:

      i. You could not predict what would happen;
      ii. You had no control over;
      iii. Have seriously affected your ability to study or do your assessment.

   b. The following are valid reasons for making a claim for ECs if you are able to show they have prevented you from studying and/or doing your assessments. There are many more reasons than those listed below.

      i. Illness or injury that has lasted for longer than one week and is serious enough to stop you from researching, writing, revising for your assessments and has impacted upon your learning.
      ii. Death of someone close to you, or the significant, ongoing effects of grief following the death of someone close to you.
      iii. Being the victim of crime (including harassment and assault).
      iv. Family difficulties (including crises and serious illness) meaning you need to provide significant support.
      v. Financial hardship that you could not have foreseen or controlled.

   c. Claims based on the following will not be successful.

      i. Minor illnesses (such as coughs and colds).
      ii. Minor computer problems that could have been prevented with adequate planning (for example, not allowing enough time to print your assessments or for interruptions in internet coverage whilst travelling).
      iii. Stress and anxiety (including panic attacks) caused by the assessment (unless your claim is supported by medical evidence and diagnosed as an illness).

Example 1:

You contract chicken pox the day before an exam. You could not predict what would happen, you have no control over your illness and you cannot sit the exam. So long as your medical note states the dates of your illness and how it has stopped you from sitting the exam, your **claim is likely to be successful**.
iv. Misreading your exam timetable or location details.

v. Having assessments close together.

vi. Moving house or attending events (such as weddings) that are planned in advance of the exam timetable being published.

vii. Employment or voluntary work (unless it is as a result of financial hardship that could not have been foreseen).

viii. Sports activities (unless the deferral of an examination process could not be used, for example if you have received late confirmation of selection for your team).

ix. Extracurricular activities, such as evening classes.

Example 2:

Your book a holiday overseas, which begins three days before the end of the exam period. Your exam timetable is released and you realise that you will be away for your final exam. Your claim will not be successful as you had control of when you went on holiday and knew the dates of the exam period.

Example 3:

Your coursework is due at 12pm. You arrive on campus at 11am to print and submit your coursework. The printers you usually use are busy so you go to a different building to print there, but the printers are not working. You manage to print your work at 11:55am and are at the School Office at 12:05pm but you are told your work is late. Your claim will not be successful because you have not allowed yourself enough time to print and submit your work.

d. Exam Irregularities and Plagiarism investigation

Where, following an investigation, there has been a decision that poor academic practice or plagiarism has occurred, an application for ECs will not normally be accepted, as this process should not be used to change the outcome of a plagiarism investigation. Instead, where you have submitted an assignment, assessment or other coursework, which has been investigated under the Code of Practice on Plagiarism (2016-17 cohort) or Code of Practice on Academic Integrity (2017-18 cohort onwards) you will need to make the Academic Integrity Officer aware of your extenuating circumstances before or during the meeting, with appropriate evidence where possible. This will be considered when the sanction is being decided rather than in applying the category of plagiarism.

An interruption to an exam or class test due to a query about a suspected irregularity will not be accepted as good reason for ECs in that assessment. Therefore a claim for ECs for that assessment or the relevant module will not be successful.

3. What should I do if I think I have ECs?
a. If you believe you have ECs and can provide evidence of this, you can make a claim using the Extenuating Circumstances Form (ECF). You must submit your claim as soon as possible. Do not wait to submit your ECF for any reason, even if you do not yet have all your evidence. Your School will have individual deadline dates for submission.

b. If your ECs happen on the day of an exam, you must submit your ECF **within 24 hours of the scheduled end time of the exam** (for example, if you have a 3-hour exam starting at 09:00 am, the scheduled end time would be 12:00pm, therefore you will have 24 hours from 12:00pm to submit your ECF).

c. Your School or Department will publish the EC procedure in your student handbook. This will include details of the staff member you will need to submit your ECF to.

### 4. Evidence

a. You will need to provide evidence with your ECF to support your claim.

b. You are responsible for getting and submitting all evidence you want to use to support your ECF. We will not gather evidence for you to support your ECF, unless there has been a disruption in a centrally managed examination venue, such as a fire alarm (please refer to section 3.3 of the Code of Practice). If this happens, Academic Services will arrange for a group ECs submission on behalf of all students affected, together with a recommendation for an appropriate outcome. You may opt out of such a group submission or, conversely, you may submit additional information if you feel that you have been particularly affected.

c. As a guide, we accept the following evidence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extenuating Circumstance</th>
<th>Evidence includes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You have a serious illness or have had an accident</td>
<td>• Letter from a doctor, nurse or hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Must be on official, headed paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Must be written at the time of the illness or accident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Must say you are or will be unfit to study at the time of the assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A very close relative is seriously ill</td>
<td>• Letter from a doctor, nurse or medical professional confirming the circumstances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Letter from a doctor, nurse or relevant professional confirming the effect the circumstances are having on your ability to do the assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Must be on official, headed paper or have an official stamp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Must confirm the dates of the illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A very close family member or friend dies</td>
<td>• Medical letter explaining how your grief is affecting your ability to do the assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Death certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are the victim of a crime</td>
<td>• Police report giving the date of the crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Must be on official, headed paper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*We do not accept crime reference numbers alone without.*
You have serious family difficulties

- Letter from a doctor, solicitor or other professional person confirming the circumstances and dates (must be on official, headed paper)
- Evidence from a doctor, nurse or relevant professional of how the problem is affecting your ability to do the assessment

There is a significant change to your financial circumstances

- Bank statements showing your current financial circumstances
- Letter of support from services set up to assist with students suffering financial hardship
- Must be on official, headed paper.

d. Evidence must be:
   i. Genuine – we will reject your claim if we find that any of the evidence you submit is false, forged or has been tampered with in any way;
   ii. Independent – we do not accept letters from relatives or friends;
   iii. Written in English – if the evidence was written in a language other than English, you must also supply an official translated copy;
   iv. Dated; and
   v. On official, headed paper or have an official stamp or seal of the issuing authority.

e. The evidence you supply does not have to be an original document. We will accept photocopied or scanned documents, but we may decide we need to see the original as well.

f. We regularly check the evidence received to make sure it is genuine. By submitting your ECF, you are giving us permission to carry out these checks. If you submit evidence which we find is false, forged or has been tampered with in any way, we may start a disciplinary investigation and your claim will not be allowed.

5. What happens after you submit your ECF

a. We will convene an Extenuating Circumstances Panel (ECP). The ECP will normally be made up of a maximum of five staff members, which will be from your School or Department.

b. Your case will be discussed sensitively and confidentially to the ECP. This means that only the ECP will know the details of your case. Should the ECP make a recommendation to the Board of Examiners, the content of your ECF will not be discussed outside of the ECP. If you don't want the ECP to know the content of your ECF, when you submit it you can write “strictly confidential and for the attention of the Chair of the ECP only” on the envelope. This means that only the Chair will see the content and will inform the ECP that evidence has been received and, if appropriate, it is valid to support your claim.

c. You cannot ask for your grades to be raised under any circumstances (unless there has been a miscount when marking).
d. An ECP will recommend one of the following. Whilst you can indicate to the EC Panel (on your EC Form) which outcome you would favour most, the EC Panel may agree on a different outcome. The outcome you favour is not guaranteed to be the outcome you receive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible Outcome</th>
<th>What this means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allow further sit/submit opportunity</td>
<td>• You will have another attempt at the assessment and the mark achieved will not be capped at the pass mark.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Should you fail the additional attempt, you will be able to reattempt the assessment, following the usual University legislation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The mark from the additional attempt will replace any mark that was affected by your ECs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow further re-sit/re-submit opportunity</td>
<td>• You will have another attempt at the assessment but this mark will be capped at the pass mark.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Should you fail the assessment, you will not be able to reattempt it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waive late penalties</td>
<td>• Any penalties applied to your work for being handed in late will be removed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• If the assessment was a resit, then your mark will still be capped at the pass mark.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• If the total mark received after the penalties have been removed is below the pass mark, you will fail the assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeat the year in full</td>
<td>• You will need to attempt the year again, but your marks will not be capped.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Your original marks will be replaced by your repeat year marks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Should you fail any of the assessments, you will be able to have another attempt at these.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• You will be expected to attend teaching sessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• You may incur additional fees for this year (for example, an additional year of tuition fees).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resit the year in full</td>
<td>• You will need to attempt the year again and your marks will be capped at the pass mark.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Your original marks will be replaced by your resit year marks, unless you passed the original assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Should you fail any of your assessments, you will not have another attempt at these.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• You may be expected to attend teaching sessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• You may incur additional fees for this year (for example, an additional year of tuition fees).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Proceed with low credit**
- You have to pass 100-credits to move to the next level of your degree. You will still need 100-credits as a minimum, but you could move to the next stage with a failed mark.
- This may become an issue if you fail any other modules later in your studies. You should speak with your Personal Academic Tutor to discuss how this might impact on your studies.

**Marks scaling**
- Scaling is the adjustment of marks for a group of students.
- Scaling may be applied if there has been a disruption in an examination venue, e.g. a fire alarm; it is therefore not listed on the ECs form as an option for students to request.
- A decision to scale marks will only be taken in discussion with Academic Services and with the agreement of the external examiner, following consideration of the impact of the disruption upon student performance.
- Scaling will be applied to all students affected by a disruption rather than to individuals.
- Scaling is not guaranteed as the outcome of any disruption in an examination venue; an alternative outcome may be deemed more appropriate.

**ECs carried forward**
- Your circumstances will be considered when a BoE is discussing your degree classification at the end of your studies.

**Award Notwithstanding Regulations**
- This option may not be available if you are studying for a professional certificate or a body outside of the University accredits your programme. You should check with your Personal Academic Tutor before requesting this option.
- You may receive a qualification or higher degree classification, if you have failed to pass the requirements but have ECs.

**Action already taken**
- You have already had an extension for coursework, etc.

**No action required**
- Your ECs have been rejected and no allowances will be made.

### 6. Decision

a. An ECP will be held after the deadline for your ECF but before the BoE meets. Once the ECP has met, we will email the decision to you using your University email address.

b. If you do not understand or are not satisfied with the outcome, you should speak to your Personal Academic Tutor. Your School/Department will also have an Extenuating Circumstance Officer (ECO) who you can contact about the outcome of your claim.