

University of Birmingham

Extenuating Circumstances Guidance for Students

These guidelines are for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught students. They also apply to the taught elements of research degree programmes.

These guidelines do not apply to the research elements of such programmes. Research degree students should keep their supervisors informed of any extenuating circumstances they have experienced and should use the Progress Review mechanism outlined in the Code of Practice for Supervision and Monitoring Progress of Research Students <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/legal/supervision-monitoring-postgrad-researchers.pdf> to formally raise matters of concern. Circumstances affecting the oral examination of theses should be raised with the School and Registry and will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

These guidelines are intended to provide an overview of the University's approach to handling claims for extenuating circumstances. The process is managed at School level so procedures may vary to a certain extent from that outlined below. Students are therefore advised to consult their School in the first instance to confirm the exact procedure they should follow.

In all cases, the Code of Practice on Extenuating Circumstances and Fit to Sit must be read in addition to these guidelines:

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/legal/extenuating-circumstances.pdf>

1. What are Extenuating Circumstances? (formerly known as 'mitigations')

Extenuating Circumstances are circumstances that are exceptional or 'unforeseen' and are over and above the course of everyday experience and may impact on a student's academic performance.

They may include:

- a) significant illness, accident or injury;
- b) the death or serious illness of a close family member or dependent;
- c) family crisis directly affecting the student;
- d) absence caused by paternity leave and jury service (deferral of which has been denied by the Court);
- e) exceptional and unforeseen financial hardship.

All submissions of Extenuating Circumstances must be accompanied by contemporaneous, independent third-party evidence.

Examples of evidence include:

- a) Doctor/ Consultant or Hospital certificate or letter;
- b) Letter from a Solicitor or Counsellor or other authority;
- c) Death Certificate.

2. Responsibilities of Students

- a) You need to inform your School and their Extenuating Circumstances Officer of any factors which you think has impacted on your academic performance which needs to be taken into account when Boards of Examiners meet.
- b) You are not able to declare extenuating circumstances to the Board of Examiners at a later date. Students not reporting such situations in time for Extenuating Circumstances Panels to consider them will normally be deemed **either** to have decided that the circumstances were not relevant **or** to have failed to fulfil their duty to report the circumstances. The University's Appeals Panels are not able to consider extenuating circumstances unless a good reason can be established for why it was not presented to the Board of Examiners before the deadline. Not knowing about extenuating circumstances procedures will not be accepted as a valid reason.
- c) You are responsible for providing acceptable and sufficient evidence.

3. How to submit Extenuating Circumstances

- a) Copies of the Notification of Extenuating Circumstances Form are available from School offices, Extenuating Circumstances Officers, the Student Support and Counselling Service, the International Student Advisory Service, and the Enquiry Services Counter in Academic Services or at:
http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/sca/documents/ec_student_form.pdf.
- b) Extenuating Circumstances must be submitted on the Notification of Extenuating Circumstances Form. Extenuating Circumstances Officers will be unable to raise extenuating circumstances without this form.
- c) Independent third party supporting or corroborative documentation of the events must be provided by you before the relevant meeting of the Extenuating Circumstances Panel and Board of Examiners.
 - i) Where illness or other medical conditions are involved, medical certificates/ doctor's letters (showing the dates where the illness occurred) must be provided to the Extenuating Circumstances Officer.

- ii) Where illness or other medical conditions are not involved you must provide to the Extenuating Circumstances Officer supporting or corroborative documents (including dates when the circumstances occurred), such as statements from counsellors, bank statements, corroboration of bereavement, an Extenuating Circumstances Support Form from the University's Student Support and Counselling Service or letter from the International Student Advisory Service, or if appropriate, your employer.
- iii) Medical Certificates or other forms of evidence should normally accompany the submission. However, if you cannot obtain medical certificates or other forms of evidence in time you can and must submit the Extenuating Circumstances Form without it in the first instance. The School will be able to make a recommendation *pending* future receipt of evidence. You must comply with any deadline your School sets.
- iv) The University **cannot** request further information about the extenuating circumstances from your doctor etc. It is **your** responsibility to provide all of the relevant information.
- v) If evidence relates to a third party, it is your responsibility to obtain the necessary consent for the disclosure of relevant information.
- d) Where evidence provided is in a foreign language it is your responsibility to have it independently translated.
- e) You must include in your submission precise details of the module(s), examinations or other examined work which they believe have been affected.
- f) This form **must** be received by the Extenuating Circumstances Officer **before** the meeting of the Board of Examiners.

4. What happens next?

- a) Usually Extenuating Circumstances will give rise to one of the following:

Option 1: Coursework or in-year assessment - Extensions

Extenuating Circumstances impacting on coursework or in year assessment will normally be dealt with by an extension being granted where appropriate to the date for submission or completion of the piece(s) of work affected.

Option 2: Coursework or in-year assessments – Other Action

Where an extension to the submission of coursework or in year assessments is not appropriate, a School may:

- a) provide guidance to allow a small element of coursework or in-year assessments to be disregarded, with the final mark(s) being recalculated from the remaining elements of coursework or in-year assessment;
- b) implement guidance to accommodate those situations where one component of the module is missing, to allow for the final mark(s) being recalculated from the remaining module component(s);
- c) implement such other action which has been approved by the College Director of Education or nominee prior to the commencement of the academic session.

Any such guidance must:

- a) specify the maximum extent that can be disregarded; and
- b) have been approved by the College Director of Education or nominee prior to the commencement of the academic session; and
- c) have been widely publicised to Registered Students in accordance with paragraph 2.2 of this Code of Practice; and
- d) ensure the overall learning outcomes can be evidenced by way of past or future coursework or in-year assessments.

Option 3: Deferral of Examinations - Fit to Sit Procedure

Extenuating Circumstances impacting on preparation for, or ability to sit a centrally co-ordinated examination(s) will be dealt with using the Fit to Sit Procedure.

Option 4: Extenuating Circumstances Panel Consideration

In circumstances falling outside coursework or in-year assessment extensions or deferral of an examination(s) under the Fit to Sit Procedure, you should submit an Extenuating Circumstances Form (ECF) for consideration by the Extenuating Circumstances Panel. This should only be used for exceptional cases where there is a good reason why the granting of an extension or the Fit to Sit Procedure is not applicable. Schools will endeavour to resolve cases via options 1, 2 or 3 in the first instance.

5. Fit to Sit

- a) By being present at an examination, you are deemed to be 'Fit to Sit' and the mark achieved in that examination will stand. A subsequent submission of extenuating circumstances will not normally be accepted.
- b) Requests for deferral must be submitted before the examination takes place. You must notify the School and present acceptable third party evidence at the earliest possible opportunity. Failure to do so could see a zero result being recorded.
- c) The School will ensure that you are advised of the consequences of requesting a deferral.
- d) The Extenuating Circumstances Officer (ECO) will present the record of examination deferrals, withdrawal of provisional deferrals and revocation of deferrals to the Extenuating Circumstances Panel for noting.

7. The Extenuating Circumstances Panel

- a) Schools will endeavour to resolve cases via options 1, 2 or 3 (above) in the first instance. Only in exceptional circumstances should an Extenuating Circumstances Panel need to meet.
- b) Membership of the ECP will be decided by the Head of School and will not usually exceed 5 members. The ECP will not include the Welfare Tutor. In cases where the ECO and the Welfare Tutor are the same person, the panel member should attend in their capacity as ECO only.
- c) An ECP should not raise marks under any circumstances. Options available to the ECP include;
 - Granting a 'first sit' for an examination or module component at the next available sitting.
 - Recommend alternative degree classification notwithstanding regulations.
 - Recommending a Leave of Absence.
- d) The Code of Practice provides greater detail on the constitution and responsibilities of the ECP: (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/legal/extenuating-circumstances.pdf>).