

Extenuating Circumstances – Jargon Buster

Any life event that you could not foresee, is not your fault, and which has affected your academic work, can be an Extenuating Circumstance. Extenuating Circumstances is not just there for illnesses.

Some examples:

- **Serious Illness**

Evidence for this could include a doctor's letter or other NHS letter. Medical evidence should indicate a diagnosis and should relate to the time of the assessment.

Exception: If you are suffering from a long-term illness, speak with the Student Enabling Centre: the University can make adjustments for this in other ways. The effects of long-term illnesses are often foreseeable and therefore not Extenuating Circumstances. If you have a long-term illness and it gets unexpectedly worse, that could be an Extenuating Circumstance but this would need to be evidenced by your doctor.

- **Family illness**

If it has had an effect on you: it's not enough to say "my mum was ill" but could be enough to say, "my mum had a life-threatening illness and I was too worried to concentrate".

Ideal evidence would be both proof of the person's illness (as above) and proof of the effect on you such as a letter from a counselling or wellbeing service.

- **Bereavement**

The ideal evidence would be a copy of the person's death certificate, but the University treats this sensitively. If you can't get a copy of the death certificate, a letter from a minister of religion or even a copy of a funeral order of service or newspaper death notice would be useful.

- **Pregnancy complications**

In most cases, you'll know you are pregnant many months before you experience any physical changes affecting your studies; so pregnancy effects aren't "unforeseen".

However, if unusual complications happen they would be “unforeseen”. The ideal evidence would be a letter from a doctor or midwife explaining this was an unforeseen and unusual complication (which has had an impact on your studies).

- Being the victim of a crime

This is certainly unforeseeable. Whether or not it’s an Extenuating Circumstance depends on how you were affected. Evidence from Victim Support or a counselling service could show that you were in no condition to study as well as you could because of the crime.

What isn’t usually an Extenuating Circumstance?

- Problems caused by home IT failure

Why? The University expects you to “back up” your work.

Any exceptions? Very rare. If your home PC breaks down and wipes everything the same day your bag containing your memory stick is stolen and the copy you emailed to yourself corrupts on the email server, you might have a case.

- Work commitments

Why? Work commitments are usually predictable.

Any exceptions? Yes, if you can show your work got unavoidably and unexpectedly busier with evidence from a manager. The key point would be that you were required to do more work as opposed to choosing to do more work.

Yes, if you can show your work changed unexpectedly; for example, if you are a member of Services personnel suddenly posted overseas.

- Your own mistakes

If you don’t leave enough time to do your work, or misread a timetable, or take a holiday on the same day as a deadline, that’s your choice and you would not be able to claim extenuating circumstances for it.

Extenuating Circumstances - the language of the decision

You want your claim to be “Upheld” – Upheld means you have had a successful claim

You do not want your claim to be “Rejected” – that means it failed i.e. an unsuccessful claim. This will show on your confirmation email as “Not Upheld”.

Decisions are sometimes “Deferred” – this means the University needs more information before making a decision. If this happens, you will get an email asking you for more information or evidence. This will show on your confirmation email as “Student Action”.

If your confirmation email shows “Not considered” please refer to the details section in your confirmation email from the Extenuating Circumstances Team which will provide further details about this decision.

If your claim is rejected (not upheld), get urgent advice from the Student Guidance Advisors http://www.staffs.ac.uk/support_depts/studentguidance/advisors/index.jsp or the Students Union Advice Centre <https://www.staffsunion.com/advice/contactus/> and – you can appeal but the time limit is “within 10 working days” of the decision.

Types of claim

Mitigation

If you claim “Mitigation” what you are saying is: “I got my work in on time but it isn’t the best I could do because of my Extenuating Circumstances” or “I sat my examination but my performance was not the best because I was unwell” etc.

If the claim is upheld but you passed the assessment, you keep the passing mark you gained and you are not able to repeat the assessment again in order to improve the mark.

If the claim is upheld and you receive a fail mark, you will be required to do the work again as if the failed assessment had never happened (if the failed assessment was a first sit, the re-sit mark you are offered would not be capped; if you were already on a re-sit or re-study attempt, you will get another opportunity but the mark will still be capped, 40% UG, 50% PG).

Late Submission

If you claim “Late Submission” what you are saying is: “I needed a small amount of extra time (no more than 5 working days, a working day is deemed to be Monday to Friday excluding public holidays) to be able to hand my work in”.

If the claim is upheld, the work you handed in late is marked as normal.

Late submission and Mitigation

You can combine these two categories.

If you claim “Late Submission and Mitigation” what you are saying is: “I needed a small amount of extra time (no more than 5 Working Days) to be able to hand my work in at all, but it still isn’t the best I could do because of my Extenuating Circumstances”.

If the claim is upheld, the work you handed in late is marked as normal.

If the work passes, you keep the pass mark and you are not able to repeat the assessment again in order to improve the mark.

If the work fails, you will be required to do the work again (the same as the “Mitigation” rules above)

Deferral – Non-submission of coursework or non-attendance at an exam

If you claim “Deferral” what you are saying is: “My circumstances meant I could not hand in the work at all”.

If the claim is upheld, you will be offered another chance to submit later at the earliest assessment opportunity. This assessment opportunity is determined by the Award Board and communicated to students via their on-line results profile on E:Vision.

How do I choose what to claim?

You can pick different categories for each assessment (for each piece of work) – you do not need to use the same category for them all.

For example: if you get two essays in on time and sit one exam, but miss a presentation you’d select “Mitigation” for the essays and the exam but select “Deferral” for the presentation.

You can seek advice from the Student Guidance Advisors, email support@staffs.ac.uk or the Students Union email sac@staffs.ac.uk if you are not sure which options to choose.

Warning 1: if you are not certain your referencing is right, do not submit the work – you can get information on referencing from RefZone at the following link:

<http://libguides.staffs.ac.uk/refzone>

Having Extenuating Circumstances does not stop the Academic Misconduct rules applying to your work.

Warning 2: if you usually get marks higher than 40%-50% it is risky to apply for “Mitigation” – if the work passes but at a low grade you get the mark regardless of the “Mitigation”. For example, if you are usually getting marks in the 68% to 78% range but pass three modules with 42% with mitigation, this will drag down your average mark quite a lot and maybe reduce your Degree Classification.

Deadlines

For all students, the application deadline is 10 working days. Information can be found at:

<http://www.staffs.ac.uk/legal/policies/extenuating-circumstances-regulations.jsp>

Remember: We have a team of professional staff who can help you with your claim. If you are unsure about anything to do with Extenuating Circumstances please seek advice from the Student Guidance Advisors, email support@staffs.ac.uk or the Students Union Advice Centre, email sac@staffs.ac.uk . We are here to help you.