



Student Administration Service.

Extenuating Circumstance Form: Explanatory Notes

1. Extenuating Circumstances

The University seeks to respond in an equitable and consistent way to requests from students for extenuating circumstances to be taken into consideration for matters relating to examinations and assessments, for example, extensions to deadlines or progression and award decisions made by Examination Boards. As well as the needs of the student claiming extenuating circumstances, academic integrity and fairness to other students must also be considered.

Extenuating circumstances are usually personal or health problems that we define as: **“Exceptional, short-term events which are outside of a student’s control and have a negative impact upon their ability to prepare for or take (sit) an assessment.”**

It is the responsibility of students to notify tutors and supervisors, or other appropriate departmental staff, at the earliest opportunity, if there are any extenuating circumstances that might have a bearing on examination/assessment performance.

You should complete and submit an Extenuating Circumstances Form, along with additional relevant documentary evidence where appropriate.

Where you have been absent for less than 7 calendar days and examinations and assessments have not been affected then you will be expected to complete a Student Self- Certification Form, in line with your academic departmental procedures for reporting absences.

If you are registered with the University Health Service (UHS) and wish to report extenuating circumstances which require supporting medical evidence to be provided by UHS, you should complete the electronic version of the Extenuating Circumstances Form located at: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/health>

You can also use the UHS mobile app.

A copy of the form will then be printed off and provided to you with a stamped doctor’s statement attached. Please note:

- You will need to have seen a doctor regarding your circumstances before requesting a form, forms will not be provided to patients who have not been seen by UHS about the circumstances.
- Requests for supporting medical evidence must be made via the link above or the mobile app. UHS will not now complete papers versions of the Extenuating Circumstances Form and will not complete forms during consultations.

2. How are extenuating circumstances considered?

Many forms submitted are not deemed to evidence that the circumstances described are genuinely extenuating or exceptional. Extenuating circumstances are considered as mitigation at the point where academic outcomes are decided by academic staff (e.g. examination boards).

Where the circumstances are deemed to be appropriately and genuinely extenuating, the options open to the academic staff/Faculty might include:

- a. no further action;
- b. Not Assessing (NA) the examination in question to allow an attempt at the next opportunity without academic penalty (where evidence strongly suggests that circumstances have seriously disadvantaged the student who has failed/not attended the assessment only; NA should not normally be allowed where a student has passed the examination);
- c. repetition of a module (outside the normal regulations);
- d. disregarding penalties for late submission of coursework;
- e. disregarding a missing component and deriving an overall mark/grade from completed work;
- f. disregarding an unreliable component and deriving an overall mark from completed work (if to the student's benefit);
- g. submitting the missing assessment if the programme has been failed;
- h. re-submitting an assessment if programme has been failed;
- i. sitting an alternative assessment if the programme has been failed.

3. What are extenuating circumstances?

Extenuating circumstances must meet the following criteria:

- a. **Non-academic** – Problems with the management of the degree programme or with academic staff should be dealt with via the Student Complaints Procedure.
- b. **Out of your control** – You could not reasonably have done anything to prevent them from happening.
- c. **Impact** – The circumstances had a negative impact on your ability to prepare for or sit an assessment. (This must be recorded on your extenuating circumstances documentation.)
- d. **Relevant** – Occurred at the time of the assessment or in the period immediately leading up to the assessment.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of circumstances which **are likely** to be accepted as extenuating circumstances:

- a. **Bereavement** - death of close relative/significant other (which in an employment context would have led to a period of compassionate leave)
- b. **Serious short term illness/accident/hospitalisation** (which in an employment context would have led to a period of sickness absence)
- c. **Deterioration or fluctuation** of a disability or long term health condition
- d. **Significant adverse personal/family circumstances**
- e. **Other significant exceptional factors for which there is evidence of stress caused**, i.e. victim of crime - evidence (police crime reference, letter from hospital/doctor treating condition, social worker letter, etc) of any of these is likely to be required by the department.

There may be many things which happen to you during your programme of studies such as **a minor illness, a sleepless night, a minor injury, financial worries** etc. However, these will not normally be accepted as extenuating circumstances; doctors, counsellors etc will not normally provide evidence that these are extenuating circumstances. In some very unusual cases where this can be documented by independent evidence they may be considered.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of circumstances which **are unlikely** to be accepted as extenuating circumstances:

- a. **Medical circumstances without supporting medical documentation or retrospective medical evidence** (i.e. a doctor's note stating that the student was seen after the illness occurred)
- b. **Medical circumstances which do not relate to the assessment period in question**
- c. **Minor illness or ailment, which in a work situation would be unlikely to lead to absence from work**
- d. Any circumstances where there is a **reasonable case that the circumstances were foreseeable and/or preventable**
- e. **Financial issues**
- f. **Religious Observance** (fasting, leaving before sundown etc) - see Section 4 below
- g. **Holidays/family events**
- h. **Transport difficulties** such as delayed flights, strikes or traffic jams (students are expected to be at their term-time home throughout the examination period or have made appropriate arrangements if sitting examinations abroad)
- i. **Late disclosure of circumstances** on the basis that the student did not feel comfortable bringing the circumstances to the attention of the academic department prior to the relevant meetings/boards
- j. **Poor time management** (pressure of work, conflicting assessment deadlines, unavailability of books etc)
- k. Missing exams due to **misreading of examination timetable or oversleeping**
- l. **Loss of computer data/printer problems** (all work should be backed up) - if work cannot be submitted due to a failure of the University computer system you should obtain a dated statement from Corporate Information and Computing Services (CiCS)
- m. **Submitting the wrong work for assessment or draft version** of the work
- n. **A long-term condition where treatment or additional support/arrangements are in place to mitigate** - see Section 6 below

4. Religious observance and exams

Assessment dates and deadlines are given in advance to students.

- Students who are observing religious festivals around the time of a deadline are responsible for planning their work so that it is completed and submitted before the deadline
- Students who know that attendance/work is prohibited on certain dates or that major festivals might fall on potentially relevant dates must contact the Student Administration Service by 31 October in the academic year to seek consideration of this.
- For examinations/ invigilated assessments that may coincide with religious festivals/ holidays see <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/exams/observance>.

5. Ongoing Medical/Personal Problems

It is expected that long-term or recurrent circumstances would normally be managed by medication or other treatment, special exam arrangements and/or support and would not fall under the scope of the extenuating circumstances policy.

- **Students with long-term or recurrent medical problems** should contact the University Health Service (or their own UK general practice) at the start of their studies. If appropriate, the doctor may provide medical evidence of this problem. You can pass this evidence to your academic department (discuss confidentiality issues with your tutor if this is a concern) and the Student Administration Service.
- **The medical condition may be defined as a disability.** See Section 6 below.
- **Students with long-term or recurrent personal problems** should contact their personal tutor or support@sheffield to discuss at the earliest opportunity. It may also be appropriate to contact the University Counselling Service at <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/counselling>.
- **If your problems are so severe as to disrupt your ability to study/meet reasonable expectations**, it may be better to request a leave of absence until your situation can be stabilised.
- **If there is an unforeseeable and unavoidable increase in long-term circumstances** leading up to or during the assessment, evidence of the exacerbation of the condition and its potential impact upon the assessment would be required and not just evidence of the condition/problem itself.

6. Disability, Disabling Conditions, Specific Learning Difficulties

Any condition that can be defined as a “physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on [your] ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities” may be supported by the Disability and Dyslexia Support Service (DDSS) – <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/disability>.

- DDSS may have (with the student’s permission) sent a Learning Support Plan (LSP), with recommendations for a student’s support, to the Disability Liaison Officer in the student’s home department. The department should check and refer to this when considering a student’s request for Extenuating Circumstances (or considering whether a disabled student needs to submit a request).
- DDSS-recommended support (including reasonable adjustments to assessments) has been put in place, the department should consider whether the student’s submission of Extenuating Circumstances is as a result of a deterioration or fluctuation of their condition. It is reasonable for the department to ask the student to provide evidence of this or to ask the DDSS for confirmation.
- If the circumstances do not relate to the existing disability, students will be expected to submit an Extenuating Circumstances Form and may be encouraged to contact the DDSS again to discuss future support.
- Students with long term ‘disabling conditions’ are strongly advised to engage with DDSS at the earliest possible opportunity. Academic Departments may refuse to accept repeated submissions of EC Forms as evidence relating to that specific condition if a student does not engage with the appropriate support services.

7. Notes for Tutors and Other Departmental Staff

Section 6 of the Extenuating Circumstances Form must be completed by an academic or other departmental staff member, for tracking purposes in case any follow up

information is required on the part of the University Health Service, or other health care provider. Section 6 can also be used for academic or other departmental staff to add any relevant comments if required.

The completed form should then be emailed to your usual Student Results and Awards Team contact in the Student Administration Service, at their sas.xxx@sheffield.ac.uk email address who will arrange for it to be circulated to other relevant departments.

Please note that University Health Service doctors will be unable to complete the form or provide evidence for students who have not consulted the Health Service, or in the case of minor illness (e.g. coughs, colds, sore throats) or personal problems which do not require consultation with a doctor. **This includes minor illness affecting examinations/ assessment.**

If, in exceptional circumstances, a tutor needs to discuss a situation with a doctor at the University Health Service, this can be arranged by telephoning the Practice Manager on extension 22102.