Extenuating Circumstance Form: 
Explanatory Notes.

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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.

Defining Extenuating Circumstances

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. You do not need to obtain supporting evidence and you do not need to obtain the authority of a health care professional.

How extenuating circumstances are 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:

- no further action;
- 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); repetition of a module (outside the normal regulations);
- disregarding penalties for late submission of coursework;
- disregarding a missing component and deriving an overall mark/grade from completed work;
- disregarding an unreliable component and deriving an overall mark from completed work (if to the student’s benefit);
submitting the missing assessment if the programme has been failed;
• sitting an alternative assessment if the programme has been failed.

Extenuating Circumstances Criteria

Extenuating circumstances must meet the following criteria:

1. **Non-academic** – Problems with the management of the degree programme or with academic staff should be dealt with via the Student Complaints Procedure.
2. **Out of your control** – You could not reasonably have done anything to prevent them from happening.
3. **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.)
4. **Relevant** – Occurred at the time of the assessment or in the period immediately leading up to the assessment.

Likely to be Accepted as Extenuating Circumstances

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

1. **Bereavement** - death of close relative/significant other (which in an employment context would have led to a period of compassionate leave).
2. **Self-isolation in relation to COVID-19** - this will be cross-referenced to the central list of students that have self-isolated. Please use the [CV-19 Coronavirus self-isolation declaration Google form](#) to tell us when you are self-isolating. Please see the section below: ‘Self-Isolation due to COVID-19’ for more information.
3. **Serious short-term illness/accident/hospitalisation** (which in an employment context would have led to a period of sickness absence).
4. **Deterioration or fluctuation** of a disability or long-term health condition.
5. **Significant adverse personal/family circumstances**.
6. **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.

Unlikely to be Accepted as Extenuating Circumstances

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

1. **Medical circumstances which do not relate to the assessment period in question.**
2. **Minor illness or ailment, which in a work situation would be unlikely to lead to absence from work.**
3. **If there is a reasonable case that the circumstances were foreseeable and/or preventable**
4. **Financial issues.**
5. **Religious Observance** (i.e. fasting, leaving before sundown etc.) See Section 4 below.
6. **Holidays/family events.**
7. **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.)

8. **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.

9. **Poor time management** (pressure of work, conflicting assessment deadlines, unavailability of books etc).

10. Missing exams due to **misreading of examination timetable or oversleeping**.

11. **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 IT Services.

12. **Submitting the wrong work for assessment or draft version** of the work.

13. A **long-term condition where treatment or additional support/arrangements are in place to mitigate**.

**Self-Isolation due to COVID-19**

If you have had to self-isolate you should contact your academic department in the first instance – they will be sympathetic to your situation and support you in using the **extenuating circumstances** process if required. Please also let the University’s support services know that you are self-isolating by completing the **CV-19 Coronavirus self-isolation declaration Google form**. The form will signpost you to the sources of welfare support available during this time. If you are simply following government guidance and staying at home in order to halt the spread of the virus, you do not need to complete the Google form.

**Religious observance and exams**

Assessment dates and deadlines are given in advance to students.

1. 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

2. 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.

3. For examinations/ invigilated assessments that may coincide with religious festivals/ holidays see **Religious Observance and Examinations**.

**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.

1. **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.

2. **The medical condition may be defined as a disability**. See Section 6 below.

3. **Students with long-term or recurrent personal problems** should contact their personal tutor or **support@sheffield.ac.uk** to discuss at the earliest opportunity. It may also be appropriate to contact the **University Counselling Service**.

4. If your problems are so severe that this significantly disrupts your ability to **study/meet reasonable expectations**, it may be better to request a leave of absence until your situation can be stabilised.
5. 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.

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 their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities” may be supported by the Disability and Dyslexia Support Service (DDSS)

1. 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).

2. If 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.

3. 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.

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Stephanie Betts
Student Administration Service