

# Extenuating Circumstances for Performance Policy

## Introduction

As a student of the University of Essex Online you have a responsibility to manage your own working schedules. In order to avoid problems with deadlines it is important that you realise that a deadline is a time *by which* work is to be completed and handed in. You should always aim to submit work prior to the deadline. A simple tactic is to set your own deadline, perhaps several days in advance of the last possible date for submission, and to organise your work around that. If you have difficulty in managing your workload, you can seek advice from your Module Tutor or the Student Support Team. For details of their roles and the support they can provide please consult the '[Academic Guidance and Student Support](#)' policy on the learning platform.

You should also make back-up copies of your work at regular intervals, and if possible on different devices, or saved on a form of 'cloud' storage so that in the event of any technical problems (computer breakdown, lost memory sticks etc.) you will still have something that you could submit for marking. We also strongly recommend that you allow enough time to upload your work to the learning platform to ensure that the upload is completed before the submission deadline expires.

We understand that there may be occasions when you are unable to undertake, complete or hand in a piece of coursework due to circumstances beyond your control. We have put in place policies for dealing with such extenuating circumstances. This policy describes the process which is relevant for those unexpected circumstances which may be affecting your overall performance across a whole module or on more than one module over a longer period of time.

If you experience shorter-lived extenuating circumstances which affect your ability to submit work by a specific deadline please notify the Student Support Team and consult the '[Late Submission of Coursework](#)' policy.



Due to time constraints please note that any course work submitted after the deadline for whatever reason may not be put forward to the next Board of Examiners. If this happens, the coursework submitted late will go to the following Board of Examiners.

## **1. Definition of Extenuating Circumstances Affecting Performance**

Extenuating circumstances affecting performance are defined as “circumstances beyond your control which have an impact on your assessed work”. Extenuating circumstances can fall into the following categories:

- Circumstances which cause you to perform less well in the assessment
- Circumstances which cause you to miss an assessment event or not to submit an assessment
- Circumstances where you are unable to submit the coursework by the deadline or to attend a summative assessment event
- Circumstances which mean that you need extra time to submit a dissertation (taught postgraduate students only)

In general, extenuating circumstances affecting performance will be of a medical or personal nature affecting you for any significant period of time during a module.

It is important to realise that only the most serious extenuating circumstances will have any significant impact on your overall performance. Therefore, the Board of Examiners is unlikely to take any action unless it believes that the extenuating circumstances have had a material effect. A Board of Examiners can only make judgements about the impact of extenuating circumstances in light of evidence of your academic ability demonstrated in non-affected work.

Boards of Examiners cannot make a judgement about your potential to have gained a higher mark if there is no evidence in the rest of your performance to suggest this. Furthermore, unless it appears that the extenuating circumstances have had a material effect on your results the Board of Examiners is unlikely to take any action. You should consider this carefully before submitting a form.



It is your responsibility to inform the Board of Examiners about extenuating circumstances affecting performance. You can do this by completing an **Extenuating Circumstances Form** which will be considered by an Extenuating Circumstances Panel who will then make recommendations to the Board of Examiners regarding the effect the extenuating circumstances have had on performance.

Although you may have previously discussed your difficulties with the Student Support Team or other staff at the University of Essex Online, this does not in itself constitute the submission of extenuating circumstances; informal notification will not be considered by the Board.

## **What is an Extenuating Circumstances Panel?**

Extenuating circumstances will be considered by a small designated group of staff; the Extenuating Circumstances Panel. The Extenuating Circumstances Panel will consider extenuating circumstances relating to coursework performance, examination non-attendance and non-submission of coursework. These Panels meet shortly before the Board of Examiners meets and make recommendations to the Board of Examiners in light of your extenuating circumstances.

Deciding whether circumstances are extenuating is a matter of discretion. The impact of circumstances on different forms of assessment of different disciplines may not be the same. The range of things that can happen and how that affects people is too large to list. The Committee should have the following powers:

- To consider extenuating circumstances claims for all students
- To decide whether the claim is valid in accordance with the extenuating circumstances policy and the associated guidance
- To request further evidence from the student
- To reject a claim when it does not meet the requirements for a valid claim
- To keep a record of the decisions taken and to advise the student of the outcome
- To seek advice on complex cases

## **What is a Board of Examiners?**

A Board of Examiners is the formal body that considers your marks. It approves marks, decides whether a student can continue studying on subsequent modules or proceed to the next level of study, and decides the degree classifications for final year students. It comprises a small number of academic staff from the relevant courses, an external examiner, and is usually chaired by the Deputy Dean of Academic Partnerships at the University of Essex.

The Board of Examiners considers all students anonymously, by ID number and great care is taken over the confidentiality of information supplied by students.

### **Circumstances NOT taken into account**

It is not possible to list every circumstance that the Board of Examiners would not accept or consider. However, some of the more obvious examples are listed below:

- General pressure of work is not taken to be circumstances beyond your control, as you are expected to plan your work schedule;
- A short-term problem or illness which has occurred during the year and which is not deemed to have had an overall effect on your performance;
- Personal disruptions or events which could have been anticipated; such as holidays, weddings, scheduled work related events such as conferences and training courses, changing address or employment, religious holidays or festivals which are usually known in advance;
- Excessive demands on time or pressure of one's employment, which could have been anticipated;
- Financial constraints commonly experienced by students;
- Misreading the coursework or deadlines or missing an examination or summative event because you misread the timetable or overslept;
- Pressures associated with taking more than one module at the same time (unless affected by extenuating circumstances);



- Where extenuating circumstances have affected you throughout your studies, it is difficult to determine what your marks might have been like otherwise. In such cases, the Board of Examiners is unlikely to take any action.

## **How to inform the Board of Examiners**

If you have encountered serious problems during the period when items of assessed work were undertaken and believe your ability to perform as you believe you should was affected, it is your responsibility to inform the Board of Examiners and you should complete an **Extenuating Performance Form**.

The Extenuating Circumstances form must be submitted prior to the Panel deadline. Each Board of Examiners has an Extenuating Circumstances Panel deadline, and your Student Support Team can advise you of this. Deadlines are also published on the Learning Platform, **Board of Examiners page** for your reference. If you do not meet the deadline for submission your request is unlikely to be considered, please contact your Student Support Team who can advise further on your options if you cannot meet the deadline. It is essential that you inform the Board of Examiners of any extenuating circumstances before it meets because you cannot subsequently appeal against any decision of the Board of Examiners on the grounds of extenuating circumstances if you could reasonably have been expected to inform the Board in advance.

It is also your responsibility to explain fully the impact of extenuating circumstances on your work. If you do not sufficiently explain the impact of your extenuating circumstances, then you cannot subsequently appeal and ask the Board of Examiners to consider additional information.

## **What Information is required?**

You should include on the **Extenuating Performance Form** details of the assessment(s) you feel were affected by extenuating circumstances. Make sure that you explain the impact these circumstances had on your performance. It is not the role of the Board to try to work this out or to seek further information on your behalf. Make your submission clear and concise.

## **What documentary evidence do I need to provide?**

It is in your interest to submit independent and reliable supporting evidence as part of your Extenuating Circumstances application. Supporting evidence should be relevant to the circumstances described in both nature and time-frame. Without supporting evidence, the Extenuating Circumstances Panel/Board of Examiners may feel obliged to reject your claim.

1. It is your responsibility to obtain evidence to support your claim and to ensure that it is submitted within the deadlines published on the learning platform. All evidence must be submitted along with the Extenuating Circumstances form.
2. All evidence provided must align with or support the dates that you have outlined as part of your claim.
3. Evidence should be presented appropriately, where possible on headed paper (or with a company stamp) and signed and dated by the appropriate qualified professionals or the author who are independent of the student. This includes staff working for the University of Essex Online. Evidence presented by email may be acceptable if the email has been sent by the author.
4. The University reserves the right to ask to see original copies of supporting evidence and/or check on the validity of the document(s) you submit.
5. All supporting evidence must be provided in English. It is your responsibility to arrange for documents to be translated and to incur any costs associated if they are not written in English. Translation should be undertaken by an accredited translator, e.g. by a member of the Association of Translation Companies.
6. If it is found that supporting evidence has been fraudulently presented to the University, this could be regarded as a breach of the Student Code of Conduct. Alternatively, if supporting evidence is found to have been amended for any reason, it is likely to be deemed inadmissible by the University.

7. The University acknowledges that, in some situations, there may be legitimate reasons which make it impossible to provide documentary evidence. If this is the case, you must explain why in your application.

Circumstance	Type of Evidence Required	Additional Information
Long term condition/disability	Written independent evidence on headed paper from a medical practitioner. The evidence is expected to provide an explanation of why and how your studies have been affected over and above any reasonable adjustments that have already been made.	<p>Where the effects of a long-term condition or disability may be expected to have a potential impact on your studies, we expect that you will discuss this with the Student Experience and Wellbeing team and/or the Student Support Team in good time before your assessments. This will allow us to determine whether we need to make any reasonable adjustments to your studies or assessments.</p> <p>The Board of Examiners will consider cases in this scenario where a new condition or disability is diagnosed too late to allow reasonable adjustments to be considered or put in place, or if you have been affected by a sudden deterioration or change in your condition.</p>
Physical/mental illness or acute personal/emotional circumstances: including long term and short term	A medical letter/certificate from an appropriate medical practitioner.	<p>Please note that many medical practitioners will not issue medical certificates either for short-term or minor illnesses, neither will they issue medical certificates where you were not treated at the time and you report your illness to a doctor retrospectively.</p> <p>Boards of Examiners may accept other evidence submitted by you, however, in many cases Boards of Examiners may judge that a short-term or minor</p>

		illness has not had a significant effect on your overall performance.
Hospitalisation: Including accident or emergency	A medical letter/certificate from an appropriate medical practitioner confirming the nature and severity of your circumstances and the likely period of impact on your ability to study and/or undertake formal assessment.	
Family Illness	A medical letter/certificate from an independent medical practitioner	Confirmation of the nature and severity of the family circumstance and the likely impact it is having on your ability to study and/or undertake formal assessment will need to be outlined as part of the evidence.
Bereavement	<p>A death certificate or a letter confirming the death from an independent person (usually not a family member)</p> <p>Other evidence can include a funeral service booklet, newspaper obituary or letter from a minister.</p>	<p>The claim should make clear the nature of the relationship between you and the deceased and how your ability to study has been affected. This is particularly necessary where the relationship is not within the immediate family (e.g. a cousin or friend).</p> <p>Successful claims for bereavement will usually be accepted for the term in which the bereavement occurred. If you consider that you have been affected for a longer period, additional evidence will be required (e.g. a letter from a medical practitioner)</p>



Pregnancy, Maternity and Paternity  Including a difficult or unplanned pregnancy	A medical certificate/letter from an appropriate medical practitioner.	
Crime:  Including being a victim of violent crime, theft or being investigated by the police.	A written statement of events which is supported by written evidence from the police including a crime reference number.  Solicitor's letter  A medical letter/certificate from an appropriate medical practitioner.	
Domestic Disruption	A letter from an appropriate independent individual/authority describing the relevant circumstances and an indication of the likely impact on your ability to study or undertake assessment.	If the letter is from a local authority/council/landlord it should be on headed paper or have an official stamp wherever possible.
Relationship problems/breakdown:	A change of address/bank	The Board of Examiners will need to have sufficient evidence to take into consideration the timing of the break-up and the duration of the

	<p>account/tenancy agreement.</p> <p>Letter from a third party eg: counsellor, solicitor, family friend.</p>	<p>relationship and any associated circumstances which may have impacted your ability to study or undertake assessment.</p> <p>A description of the nature of the relationship (e.g. whether it is your own relationship or a relationship which has a significant impact on you, such as a parental relationship). The evidence should include a statement of how the circumstances have affected your ability to student or undertake assessment.</p>
Exceptional financial difficulties	<p>Letters from a bank/Student Finance/Employer/Council etc)</p> <p>A medical letter/certificate from an appropriate medical practitioner.</p>	<p>The Board of Examiners will only consider cases where there is clear evidence that the situation is serious, unexpected and not of your own making. Financial difficulties commonly experienced by students are not considered extenuating.</p>
Major and exceptional travel disruption	<p>Weather, traffic or other incident report.</p> <p>Correspondence from the travel provider.</p> <p>Tickets</p>	<p>You will need to include a clear statement of what has occurred and how you consider it has affected your ability to study and/or undertake assessment. The Board of Examiners may consider whether you allowed sufficient time for travel</p>
Serious and significant personal incidents:	Letter from a solicitor/council/employer	

Including homelessness, direct experience of natural disaster	/professional support work etc  Insurance  Documentation  Medical letter/certificate from an appropriate medical practitioner.	
Jury Service (UK)	A letter from the Court together, where appropriate with proof that a deferral has been requested and rejected or proof that a previous request for deferral was accepted	If you asked to undertake jury service that would affect your ability to meet any of the requirements of your programme, you should normally make a request to the Court for the Jury Service to be deferred. You should discuss the impact of jury service with the Student Support Team and whether you should make a deferral request.
Unusual and unexpected extreme pressures of work	A letter from your line manager explaining the relevant circumstances and their impact on your ability to study or undertake assessment.	Your evidence must make it clear that the pressures of work were unexpected and not a usual part of your role or responsibilities.

## Assessment of extenuating circumstances by the Board of Examiners

The Board of Examiners will try to determine whether, and to what extent, extenuating circumstances have affected your performance, and determine what action, if any, can be taken.

In assessing the significance of extenuating circumstances, the Board normally takes into account:



- The severity of the problem and the length of time involved;
- Any supporting documentary evidence;
- Whether all work in the same period appears to have been equally affected;
- Whether it is possible to gauge the effect of the extenuating circumstances upon academic performance;
- Whether the student's achievement is consistent with past performance;
- The type of assessment affected, and how long you had to complete the work (i.e. date when work set and deadline for submission).

Boards of Examiners cannot estimate potential. For example, if you have performed at 2:2 level in your other assessments, and then miss an assessment in which you believe you could have got a 2:1 because you had prepared well, you cannot expect a Board of Examiners to share your view. Boards will not impute marks, that is add marks or estimate what your mark might have been.

### **Possible action that a Board of Examiners can take?**

The Board of Examiners will try to ensure a fair result based on your overall performance. It could take a number of actions including:

- Amending the weighting of particular units that contribute to the overall course assessment.
- Discounting particular pieces of work from the assessment of the level.
- Allowing a reassessment attempt to be treated as a first sit, often for an uncapped mark, where capping would normally apply.
- Instating a formative mark for a late piece of work

Whenever possible a Board of Examiners will try to make a decision about what, if any, action can be taken in the case of problems affecting you at the time the level/stage is being taken. However, sometimes it may not be possible for the Board of Examiners to determine what action would be

reasonable, and it may therefore carry forward the extenuating circumstances for consideration by a subsequent Board of Examiners when they will have more marks to review.

In the case of severe extenuating circumstances affecting the final months of your studies there is a provision for a Board of Examiners to consider the award of an aegrotat degree.

Boards of Examiners will not:

- Permit you, if you present extenuating circumstances to proceed to the next Level of study if you have not met the necessary requirements, unless the examiners are satisfied that it is appropriate to do so on academic grounds;
- Permit you to fail a core module or fail any published variations to the rules of assessment
- Award a higher class of degree if the examiners are not satisfied that this is a fair result based on your demonstrated academic performance;
- Add extra marks because your work has been affected by extenuating circumstances;
- Amend marks from the previous Level of study;
- Annotate statements of results/transcripts with comments about the existence of extenuating circumstances

## **2. False Claims**

You should note that submitting a false claim or false documentation is a serious matter and would be regarded as an attempt to gain unfair advantage. This would be a breach of student conduct and would be dealt with under the Student Code of Conduct. We reserve the right to check on the validity of the document(s) you submit by contacting the third party directly.

## **3. Data Protection Act 2018**

By submitting the Extenuating Circumstances Form you are agreeing to the University of Essex Online holding this personal data for the purposes of processing your claim. We will hold this data in accordance with its notification under the 2018 Data Protection Act.



## 4. Equality Act 2010 and information for Disabled

### Students

If you find that you are unable to submit an electronic copy of the Extenuating Circumstances Form, you can request a hard copy of the form from the Student Support Team. The form should be submitted to the Student Support Team and you should still submit any relevant evidence with the form.

If you have queries about a claim which has been rejected, please email the Student Support Team to request further information. You can also discuss this feedback with staff in the Study Skills team if you believe that your individual needs have not been understood or adequately taken into account.

If you are providing information about your disability on your extenuating circumstances form, please note that this does not count as disclosure to the University of Essex Online as these forms are intended for use only by the Board of Examiners. We strongly urge you to disclose any persistent medical condition, specific learning difficulty or disability formally to your Student Support Team.

### **IMPORTANT - PLEASE READ: Information about you that may affect professional suitability**

- We are committed to a fair and confidential process for handling extenuating circumstances and recognise that this process may involve the disclosure and handling of sensitive personal information.
- We are committed to full compliance with our obligations related to professional suitability in order to uphold the highest standards of conduct among our students both during and beyond their period as a student at the University of Essex Online.
- All our students are required to comply with the Disciplinary Procedure and **Student Code of Conduct**. Failure to meet these responsibilities can lead to the *Breach of Professional Conduct, Fitness to Practise and Termination of Training Procedure* being invoked. You will have been

informed when you registered as a student if your degree scheme is subject to any of these procedures.

- Breaches of professional standards by students may involve a range of actions or omissions but may include:
  - actions that are harmful to service users, other members of the public or service provides;
  - actions that are likely to constitute an unacceptable risk to students or others;
  - failure to disclose information about previous matters relating to professional suitability prior to enrolment on the scheme;
  - contravention of the relevant professional code of conduct;
  - actions that are prejudicial to the development or standing of professional practice.
- In addition, for students studying law, we have an obligation to report relevant information related to professional suitability to the Law Society.
- Any information that is provided on any extenuating circumstances form that raises issues of professional suitability, whether it has been disclosed by you and about you or by another student on another form but relates to you will be disclosed as necessary to the relevant internal or external authorities. Information will only ever be disclosed on a need to know basis to ensure that we are able to comply with its obligations related to professional suitability. These authorities may include the Professional Practice and Conduct Committee, your employer if your registration as a student relates to Continuing Professional Development or any relevant Professional or Regulatory Body.

Responsible Manager	Name	Date approved	Related Policies
Director of Quality and Compliance	Carol Dadd	Feb 2025	<u><b>Extenuating Circumstances for Performance Policy</b></u> <u><b>Postgraduate Taught Dissertation Extension Policy</b></u> <u><b>Intermission Policy</b></u>

