



## **UCP-ASS006 Higher Education Extenuating Circumstance Policy**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 University Centre Peterborough (UCP) requires students to submit work on, or before the published hand-in dates. All students have a responsibility to balance their workloads, to ensure they submit work for assessment by the set date of the assessment.

1.2 However, UCP recognises that students may from time to time suffer from serious, sudden and unforeseen circumstances which were beyond a student's control which:

- prevented them from undertaking an assessment task (e.g., were unable to attend an examination, give a presentation or submit a coursework assignment) OR
- adversely impaired their performance when undertaking an assessment task (e.g., they became ill during an examination).

Such events are referred to as extenuating circumstances.

1.3 This policy outlines the procedure to be followed when a student submits a request for extenuating circumstances to be considered.

1.4 The purpose is to have a clear procedure that will:

- a) apply a uniformity and consistency of treatment across UCP
- b) provide clear guidance on the process to be followed when a student requests extenuating circumstance
- c) enable up-to-date student assessment information to be available
- d) serve as a UCP procedure statement to interested third parties
- e) enable accurate data to be provided for statistical and audit purposes

### **2. SCOPE**

2.1 This policy applies exclusively to all Higher Education provision offered by UCP. This also applies to sub contractual provision.

### **3. RELATED DOCUMENTS**

IEG-GDPR01 Data Protection Policy

UCP - ASS001 Higher Education (Non-examination) Assessment Policy for Open University Programmes

UCP-EXM001 Higher Education Examination Policy

UCP-ASS005 Higher Education Academic Appeal Policy

UCP-ASS002 Higher Education Security of Summative Assessment Policy

Awarding Body Regulation:

- Anglia Ruskin University:  
[https://web.anglia.ac.uk/anet/academic/academic\\_regulations.phtml](https://web.anglia.ac.uk/anet/academic/academic_regulations.phtml)  
UCP Rules, Regulations and Procedures for students (ARU students)
- The Open University: [Regulations for Validated Awards](#)
- Bishop Grosseteste University: <https://www.bishopg.ac.uk/about-bgu/policies-and-procedures>

#### 4. RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 The Academic Director has overall responsibility for the procedure, but has delegated day-to-day responsibility for overseeing its implementation to those identified:

##### **Current Students**

- are responsible for submitting a claim for extenuating circumstances within 5 working days of an assessment due date (or providing valid evidence to support a late claim)

##### **UCP Student Adviser/ Support Officer**

- is responsible for providing advice and guidance to students about the process of claiming extenuating circumstances;
- submitting students claim to [academicoffice@ucp.ac.uk](mailto:academicoffice@ucp.ac.uk) prior to the Extenuating Circumstance Panel Meeting.

##### **UCP Academic Officer**

- is responsible for maintaining this procedure;
- Chairing the Extenuating Circumstance Panel;
- Tracking receipt of students claims and evidence;
- Keeping students claims and evidence secure;
- Updating student records and communicating the outcome of a claim to the student.

#### 5. RISK ANALYSIS

5.1 This policy is required to ensure that correct procedures are in place and are followed.

##### **Analyse risks of non-adherence to this policy**

5.2 Failure to adhere to this policy could lead to academic failure of students, complaints and in extreme cases, legal action.

##### **Staff training needed**

5.3 All staff involved in this procedure are required to undertake annual training delivered by the Academic Office to outline the process to which they need to adhere. This training will be enhanced by annual updates provided on procedural requirements which will be delivered by the Academic Office.

#### 6. DATA PROTECTION

6.1 UCP complies with the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation, Data Protection Act, 2018. As such, applicants' and student data are treated as confidential by all staff involved in this process and is not divulged unnecessarily or inappropriately. However, the aforementioned Act requires UCP to release certain information to UK authorities upon request in order to assist those authorities with the prevention and detection of fraud or other crimes. We will release the requested information on receipt of an appropriate request from UK authorities such as (but not limited to) the police, Home Office (for immigration and related matters), local authorities, and the Department for Work and Pensions.

6.2 UCP may use anonymised data collected as part of a student extenuating circumstance request:

- internally for reporting, evaluation, learning and training; and
- externally for discussion with regulators in the higher education sector.

## PROCEDURE

### 7. Terminology used

- 7.1 Extenuating circumstance is the process by which allowance is made for any serious adverse circumstances of limited duration which could not reasonably have been foreseen which may have seriously affected a student's performance in an assessment element(s) (including an element submitted for re-assessment).
- 7.2 The circumstances should be current, unanticipated and beyond a student's control rather than disadvantageous conditions experienced throughout their studies (students with serious, long-term/permanent difficulties should contact a Student Advisor).
- 7.3 Extenuating circumstance claims related to a long-term/permanent condition will only be considered if evidence that demonstrates an exacerbation of the condition at the appropriate time(s) is provided. Evidence of the existence of the long-term condition in itself is insufficient for the purposes of the extenuating circumstance process.
- 7.4 Working days are defined by UCP as the days of the week UCP is open for business. For example, Monday to Friday excluding public holidays and when the building is closed.

### 8. Support for Students

- 8.1 Students wishing to request consideration of an extenuating circumstance must complete a claim form. It is advisable for students to also meet with a Student Advisor to discuss their circumstances.
- 8.2 A student can make an appointment with a Student Advisor by:
- Peterborough: Visiting the UCP Support Centre, emailing [support@ucp.ac.uk](mailto:support@ucp.ac.uk) or telephoning 01733 214466
  - Stamford: emailing [support@ucp.ac.uk](mailto:support@ucp.ac.uk)
- 8.3 Telephone or face-to-face appointments can be arranged if required, but the student has the responsibility to complete the application and provide evidence in support of their claim. The claim can be signed electronically.
- 8.4 In cases where the extenuating circumstance process is likely to exacerbate a students' existing health problem or result in additional stress, a Long-Term Extension can be considered provided the deadline date has not yet passed.

### 9. Claim Deadlines

- 9.1 Extenuating circumstance claims are claimed after the summative submission deadline.
- 9.2 Claims for extenuating circumstance are submitted no later than 5 working days after the published (or extended) submission deadline of assessed work or the date on which an examination was held.
- 9.3 Claims for extenuating circumstance are submitted by the student, or in exceptional circumstances (e.g., when a student has been hospitalised) by a Student Advisor on behalf of the student.
- 9.4 Current students may submit a late claim. This is defined as a claim which is submitted after the standard deadline (up to five working days after the published, or extended submission deadline). In addition to the detail of the extenuating circumstance claim and the supporting evidence, students are also required to provide an explanation for the late submission of the Extenuating Circumstance claim, supported by appropriate documentary evidence.

9.5 If a student has been discontinued by the Awards/Exam Board they must follow the Academic Appeals process if they have any extenuating circumstances they wish the Board to consider.

## 10. Criteria for Requesting Extenuating Circumstance

10.1 Extenuating circumstance (late and on time claims) cannot be claimed against an (initial or re-assessment) attempt at an assessment element for which a penalty for an assessment offence has been applied. The claim is deemed null and void.

10.2 The following reasons are a non-exhaustive list of examples of commonly rejected grounds/reasons:

- ✗ Alleged statement of a medical condition without reasonable evidence (medical or otherwise) to support or a condition supported by 'retrospective' medical evidence – that is, evidence that is not (contemporaneous) in existence at the same time as the illness, e.g. a doctor's note which states that the student was seen (after the illness occurred) and declared they had been ill previously;
- ✗ Alleged medical circumstances outside the relevant assessment period or learning period for which extenuating / special circumstances have been applied for;
- ✗ Colds, minor illness or ailment, which in a work situation would be unlikely to lead to absence from work. Students should allow time for such circumstances within their planning;
- ✗ Failure to establish adequate arrangements in advance for the care of a child or adult for whom the student has caring responsibilities;
- ✗ If there is a reasonable case that circumstances relied on were foreseeable or preventable, i.e. the following will commonly not be accepted:
  - I. Holidays
  - II. Financial issues
  - III. Personal computer problems or poor practice e.g., no back up of electronic documents
  - IV. Printer problems
  - V. Lack of awareness of submission dates /times and examination date / times
  - VI. Poor time management
  - VII. Submission of incorrect document or submission of correct document to the incorrect location;
- ✗ Late disclosure of circumstances on the basis that students were able but unwilling to confide in a staff member about their extenuating / special circumstances;
- ✗ Poor awareness of UCP's Academic Regulations;
- ✗ Being unaware of, or misunderstanding, a submission deadline or the date of an examination;
- ✗ Computer, USB memory stick, disk, printer or any other technical failure for which the student is responsible (students should ensure that they keep a back-up copy of their work).

10.3 A non-exhaustive list of examples of evidence accepted in support of extenuating circumstance claims:

Extenuating Circumstance	Evidence Required
<b>Bereavement</b> - the recent death, or serious illness, of a close family member, a friend or person for whom the student has a responsibility of care;	Letter from next of kin, an Order of Service, legal document or death certificate. If the student has a different last name to the deceased, please provide evidence of the relationship with the deceased.

<p><b>Serious personal illness</b> which is not a permanent condition (of a nature which in an employment context would have led to an absence on sick leave).e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Neurological (e.g., concussion, migraine, blackouts, seizure, severe pain)</li> <li>- Ear/eye (e.g., eye, ear infections, tinnitus, vertigo)</li> <li>- Respiratory (e.g., asthma attack, chest infection/pneumonia)</li> <li>- Digestive (e.g., stomach upset, diarrhoea, food poisoning, vomiting / nausea)</li> <li>- Genito-urinary (e.g., U.T.I.)</li> <li>- Musculo skeletal (e.g., severe back pain, broken bone)</li> <li>- Infectious diseases (e.g., chicken pox, flu, swine flu, measles, mumps, meningitis)</li> <li>- Other medical conditions (e.g., severe allergic reaction, severe toothache, panic attacks)</li> <li>- Pregnancy related condition</li> </ul>	<p>Email/letter from health care professional confirming that the illness has had an impact on your ability to study at the time of the assessment/s being claimed.</p>
<p>Evidence of a long term, <b>fluctuating health condition/ disability</b></p>	<p>ILP or email/letter from health care professional confirming any diagnoses/ incidents with dates.</p>
<p>Significant <b>worsening in any adverse personal/ family/ welfare circumstances</b></p>	<p><i>A disability which emerges during a student's studies may be considered under the extenuating circumstance process at the first assessment point after it emerges. Following diagnosis and assessment of the effects of the condition UCP will make allowance and in doing so enables the student to be assessed on the same basis as other students.</i></p>
<p><b>Caring responsibilities</b> e.g., where normal caring arrangements temporarily break down</p>	<p>Email/letter from organised carers to confirm the breakdown in normal arrangements e.g., school, nursery, care home.</p>

- 10.4 Where a request for Extenuating Circumstance to be considered is submitted late (more than 5 working days after the submission deadline) a full explanation, and any available evidence, of the reason for the lateness must be provided. Without an explanation the claim will not be considered. A non-exhaustive list of examples of evidence accepted in support of late extenuating circumstance applications:
- ✓ Confirmed severe mental health issues.
  - ✓ Illness which has led to confirmed hospitalisation of the student and prevented the submission of an extenuating circumstance application.

## **11. Request for Supporting Evidence**

- 11.1 A Student Advisor will request evidence from a student to support Extenuating Circumstance requests.
- 11.2 Medical evidence (e.g. a note from a doctor or other healthcare professional confirming the illness or incident during the period in which it was apparent) will be sought for Extenuating Circumstance requests made on medical grounds.
- 11.3 If supporting evidence is required but not available at the time the student submits their request, the Student Advisor must inform them that they have 5 working days to provide it. If it is not received by this deadline the request is automatically rejected.

## **12. Extenuating Circumstances Panel**

- 12.1 The Extenuating Circumstance Panel meets once a month. Claims received 5 working days in advance of the meeting are reviewed.
- 12.2 The following members must attend for the decisions of a meeting to be valid unless unforeseen circumstances exceptionally prevent attendance. In which case appropriate alternative arrangements should be made provided the circumstances arise an enough time in advance of the meeting:
  - a) Academic Officer (or nominee) (Chair)
  - b) 3 HE Managers, including the one from the Faculty the student attends
- 12.3 The Panel is responsible for:
  - a) ensuring students are fully aware of the extenuating circumstance process and how and when they can apply;
  - b) considering all claims for extenuating circumstance and to determine the outcome in all cases;
  - c) ensuring that claims are current and that the extenuating circumstance is unanticipated and beyond the students control rather than disadvantageous conditions experienced throughout their studies (students with serious, long-term/permanent difficulties should contact UCP Student Support);
  - d) ensuring that each submission is considered in a fair and equitable manner.
- 12.4 The Faculty representative will present claims on behalf of the student within their Faculty.
- 12.5 The Panel will determine:
  - a) whether a student has presented substantiated evidence of circumstances eligible for extenuating circumstance;
  - b) whether the circumstances could have had an effect on the student's performance;
  - c) how significant the effect of any extenuating circumstance would likely have been.
  - d) In extenuating cases a student may request when submitting a claim for extenuating circumstance that the detail of the claim is not disclosed to the Extenuating Circumstance Panel which considers the claim. In such cases only the Chair of the Panel has access to the detail of the claim and submits a recommendation to the Panel for consideration.
  - e) The Extenuating Circumstance Panel will take the following into account during their deliberations:
    - the nature of the claim;
    - the impact the proposed extenuating circumstance may have had on the assessment in question;
    - the relationship between the proposed extenuating circumstance and the assessment;

- what actions the student has taken to address the problem.
- 12.6 Decisions will be made by the Panel in the light of the evidence provided and will take into consideration the severity of the problem and the length of time involved.
- 12.7 Cases may be adjourned if further information is needed. The Panel Chair must write to the student to request the information, which must be provided by a date agreed by the Panel. If the information is not provided, the application will not be granted. The student must then be informed of the Panel’s decision.
- 12.8 The Panel may decide not to uphold a claim on the basis that the student has not made a case, has not provided supporting evidence, that the supporting evidence does not support the claim, or that the student had no good reason for not advising of the circumstances prior to the assignment or examination for which extenuating circumstance are claimed.
- 12.9 The Panel will not recommend that a student should receive additional marks or amend marks from a previous academic year of study.
- 12.10 The Panel will not review claims previously considered and rejected.
- 12.11 The Panel is required to:
- a) report, by student, to the Exam Board (for awards validated by the OU and Pearson) the extenuating circumstance s considered, accepted or not accepted;
  - b) on completion of the panel meeting, notify students (through ProPortal) of the outcomes and decisions that affect them.
- 12.12 All Extenuating Circumstance Panel’s must follow standard agenda items:
- i. Welcome and apologies
  - i. Confirmation that the Panel is quorate and therefore able to take decisions
  - ii. Confirmation that students have taken modules/units that lead to the qualifications under the jurisdiction of the Panel
  - iii. Details of any Chair’s Actions taken since last meeting
  - iv. **Stage 1: Identifying Claims:**
    - a. Cases received after the published claim date are identified.
    - b. Claims which are not supported by documentary evidence are identified If there is no credible and compelling explanation for the late claim or lack of evidence, these students must be advised that their claims cannot be considered in writing sent by email.
  - v. **Stage 2: Reviewing in-time Claims:**
    - a. The Chair presents Extenuating Circumstances applications on behalf of the student.
    - b. Committee members consider the following:
      - the nature of the proposed Extenuating Circumstances;
      - the evidence provided;
      - the impact the proposed Extenuating Circumstances may have had on the assessment in question;
      - the relationship between the proposed Extenuating Circumstances and the assessment;
      - what actions the student has taken in an attempt to address the problem.
    - c. Cases may be adjourned if further information is needed. The Panel must contact the student by email to request the information, which must be provided by a date agreed by members. If the information is not provided,

the application will not be granted. The student must then be informed of the decision.

- d. Students must be informed of decisions within 10 working days of the Panel meeting. This should be done in writing by email. If the Panel has decided not to grant Extenuating Circumstances the reasons for the decision must be clearly explained in writing.
- e. If an extenuating circumstances application is supported, then the decision of the Extenuating Circumstances Panel is reported for information to the relevant Exam Board (for OU awards) and Assessment Panel (for Pearson awards), where a new assessment submission deadline date will be set.
- vi. Reminder that discussions and decisions taken at the Panel are confidential.
- vii. Any other business and the proposed date and time of the next meeting.

### **13. Panel Decision Making**

- 13.1 Applications for extenuating circumstance are considered on an individual student basis, taking into account any previous applications.
- 13.2 Claims are considered against two criteria by the Extenuating Circumstance Panel:
  - I. the basis of the claim is an acceptable ground for extenuating circumstance; and
  - II. the claim is supported by documentary evidence(e.g., a certificate/letter from a medical professional in the case of illness; a death certificate in the case of bereavement etc.) which must accompany the claim wherever practicable.
- 13.3 Claims are considered only if both the above criteria are satisfied.
- 13.4 Claims are considered by the UCP Extenuating Circumstance Panel without knowledge (whether by staff or students) of any mark attained by students and, within the context of the UCP Extenuating Circumstance Panel, in confidence.
- 13.5 Where an extenuating circumstance claim has been submitted, the Panel first determines if the student has provided a valid reason for why the claim was submitted late. Poor awareness of UCP's Academic Regulations, or a student choosing not to submit an Extenuating Circumstance claim by the standard deadline in order to wait for the publication of results, are not acceptable or valid reasons for the submission of a late claim.
- 13.6 If the Panel believes that no valid reason (supported by documentary evidence) has been provided to explain the late submission of a claim, it will be rejected.
- 13.7 If the Panel is satisfied that a valid reason for the late submission of the claim has been provided (and supported by documentary evidence), the Panel will consider the details of the Extenuating Circumstance claim.
- 13.8 Students must be informed of decisions in writing by email, as well as through ProPortal. If the Panel has decided not to grant Extenuating Circumstances the reasons for the decision must be clearly explained in writing. If the claim is upheld the student is informed and given one of three options:
  - I. If the student has already taken the assessment and has achieved a pass mark, the student will be allowed to accept or decline the offer of a further attempt. If the student fails to indicate acceptance of the further attempt by the date agreed, the offer must be withdrawn.
  - II. The student will be allowed a further assessment attempt to be determined by the Exam Board.
  - III. Waive late submission penalties.



#### **14. Recording of Extenuating Circumstance requests, decision and updating of assessment records**

- 14.1 The Academic Officer records the date, the reason for the request and the outcome in the minutes of the Panel meeting. The detailed reason is kept confidential to members of the Extenuating Circumstance Panel and the Academic Office. A log of extenuating circumstance claims and their outcome is also held where the record of reason for the request does not include specific detail. This is used to produce internally reported, anonymised data on Extenuating Circumstance claims used to evaluate the service, to discuss prevention measures and for evaluation, learning and training.
- 14.2 The Academic Officer updates the student's record on the Student Management System within 5 working days of the meeting to reflect the outcome of any decisions made by the Extenuating Circumstance Panel.
- 14.3 The student is informed of the outcome by email to the students UCP email account.

#### **15. Appeals Procedure**

- 15.1 A student can submit an academic appeal requesting a review of the decision of the Extenuating Circumstances Panel. The student must follow the UCP-ASS005 HE Academic Appeal Policy available from [www.ucp.ac.uk/policies/](http://www.ucp.ac.uk/policies/).
- 15.2 If a student is not satisfied with the outcome of this process, they can make a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education provided they have been issued with a Completion of Procedures letter. That letter will explain how to submit a complaint and the deadline for doing so is 12 months from the date of the letter.