

Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure

1 Introduction

- 1.1 During a period of study, students may encounter significant personal difficulties that impact on their ability to study for, or complete academic assessment(s) including examination. The University refers to these personal difficulties as “Extenuating Circumstances”.
- 1.2 This policy is supported by two Annexes:
- Annex A: Extenuating Circumstances Panel Terms of Reference
 - Annex B: Processes for the submission, consideration and communication of Extenuating Circumstances claims and outcomes.

2 Extenuating Circumstances

- 2.1 There are two ways in which extenuating circumstances can be taken account of when considering student performance in assessment and for which mitigation may be given:

2.1.1 Extensions

In accordance with academic regulations a student, with good reason, may apply to their Head of School (or nominee) in advance of the published assessment deadline for an extension of up to 5 working days.

2.1.2 Extenuating Circumstances Claims

A student may submit an ‘Extenuating Circumstances Claim’ to apply to defer an attempt for assessment(s) not already taken, **or**, to claim for mitigation of assessments already taken. In both cases independent evidence of the circumstances being claimed will be required.

Claims to defer an assessment should be submitted before the assessment takes place.

Requests for extension to periods of Suspension of Study are also considered within this procedure.

(The remainder of this document is concerned with 2.1.2 Extenuating Circumstances Claims. The regulations for 2.1.1 Extensions are described in the Taught Course Academic Regulations – Late submission of course work.)

3 Grounds for Extenuating Circumstances

- 3.1 Extenuating Circumstances are circumstances that are exceptional or unforeseen and are over and above the course of everyday experience. They may include:
- a) Significant illness, accident or injury;
 - b) The death or serious illness of a close family member or dependent;

- c) Family crisis directly affecting the student;
- d) Absence caused by paternity leave and jury service (deferral of which has been denied by the Court);
- e) Exceptional and unforeseen financial hardship;
- f) Acute personal and emotional circumstances.

3.2 Students with a chronic illness or disability are encouraged to access the support services available which can put in place reasonable adjustments for specific learning requirements and examinations. In light of the possibility of reasonable adjustment, prolonged, chronic or long-term conditions are not normally considered a basis for Extenuating Circumstances. However, the **timing** of the diagnosis of such conditions may be considered a basis for Extenuating Circumstances. For example, late diagnosis such that reasonable adjustments cannot be made.

In addition, students who are pregnant should seek arrangements for a 'Pregnant Student Support Plan' (PSSP) to be put in place. (For further information on this see Student Support.)

3.3 Forms of evidence

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Admissible Evidence</u>
Illness	<p>When it applies to the individual making the claim. Medical supporting evidence which details the nature of the illness, when it occurred and its duration and a professional opinion on how it may have affected the student's ability to study/do assessment(s).</p> <p>When it applies to close family members. Copies of medical appointments; diagnosis reports; discharge notices etc.</p>
Mental health	<p>Written confirmation from Leeds Trinity Student Support, Student Counsellor, or other equivalent body which states the nature of mental health concern, when it occurred and its duration and a professional opinion on how it may have affected the student's ability to study/do assessment(s).</p>
Crime (e.g. burglary)	<p>Official police crime report.</p>
Motor incident/accident	<p>Police report/hospital admission certificate.</p>
Other	<p>Written evidence separate to the application form (that is not copied into the form) from an independent third party who has first-hand knowledge of the situation – this may include Leeds Trinity academic tutors but not family members, fellow students, friends etc. The evidence should include a description of the nature of the factor, when it occurred and its duration and an opinion on how it may have affected the student's ability to study/do assessment(s).</p>

3.4 Extenuating Circumstances documentation, including evidence material, is treated confidentially and is made available only to those persons that have to make a judgement on the claim.

3.5 Students who submit for consideration of extenuating circumstances should not assume it will be approved and should continue to undertake study and prepare for/do assessment(s) whenever possible until they are formally advised of the outcome of consideration.

4 Deadlines for notification of Extenuating Circumstances

- 4.1 Deadlines relating to the submission of Extenuating Circumstances claims will be set by Student Administration Office (SA) usually by the start of the academic year. The SA will publicise deadlines and the process for the submission of Extenuating Circumstances claims using a variety of media, for example handbooks and induction material, emails and online resources.
- 4.2 It is the responsibility of the student to comply with the deadlines relevant to their programme of study. Furthermore it is the sole responsibility of the student to disclose Extenuating Circumstances and submit the necessary forms and evidence in a timely manner and without delay. Academic Tutors cannot make submissions on behalf of students *without their express agreement in writing*.
- 4.3 Students should report Extenuating Circumstances at the earliest possible opportunity. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure deadlines are adhered to.

5 Principles of consideration of Extenuating Circumstances

- 5.1 The following principles will govern the consideration of Extenuating Circumstances Claims:
- the best interest of the student, and the need for decisions to enable, rather than disable, future academic performance;
 - the duty to protect the interest of the University in upholding academic standards;
 - the application of equitable and consistent decision-making across the student body.
- 5.2 As far as possible, outcomes of consideration of extenuating circumstances cases should be judged to be the outcome for the student if the circumstances had not arisen. Within this principle, however, the student must have demonstrated that they have engaged with their academic programme¹ and that they are in a position to benefit from the outcome of the panel consideration.
- 5.3 In addition, the following factors will also be taken into account:
- (i) the extent to which the case is sufficiently evidenced;
 - (ii) academic judgement on the effect that the circumstances are likely to have had, or will have, on performance and, in this context, whether the circumstances:
 - prevent/prevented the student from completing an assessment(s);
 - affect/affected the student's capacity to study prior to/during the assessment(s);
 - have/had an adverse impact on the student's performance during the period denoted by the evidence;
 - (iii) to note if requests for extenuating circumstances have already been taken account of, and whether those circumstances might reasonably be expected to prevail in any subsequent claim based on the same evidence.

6 Extenuating Circumstances – Possible Outcomes

Usually Extenuating Circumstances will give rise to one of the outcomes listed below.

Outcome 1: Extension to in-year assessments

Extensions to the submission date for assessments may be given over and above the 5-day extension permitted in the regulations.

¹ A range of criteria are used in this context to denote engagement – attendance and participation in classes, attempts at assessments, communication with tutors, use of library and other learning resources.

Where possible the extension date will be such as to allow consideration of the assessment outcome through the normally scheduled School Boards of Examiners thus enabling the student to be considered for progression or award as applicable.

If a longer extension is deemed appropriate the impact on progression/award decisions should be taken into account.

Failure by the student to meet the extended deadline date is treated in same way as a standard deadline - that is late submission penalties will apply.

Outcome 2: Alternative assessment

Where extension to submission date is not appropriate the ECP may recommend alternative form(s) of assessment. The alternative assessment is required to be set by the relevant School and approval of such assessment by the External Examiner should be secured as necessary.

Outcome 3: additional (re-)assessment and/or removal of late submission penalties

Taking into account the assessments attempted and the profile overall, that:

- a) a further opportunity be given for re-assessment in one or more modules;
- b) one or more marks are expunged and further "original" attempt(s) be allowed without loss of opportunity (that is re-assessment regulations will pertain in the event of failure);
- c) one or more marks have late submission penalties reversed.

Outcome 4: Re-start the year

It may be recommended that a student be permitted to re-start the entire level under the same terms as is available for students who fail 80 credits or more¹.

Outcome 5: Suspension of Study (temporary withdrawal)

Exceptionally, the Extenuating Circumstances Panel (ECP) may determine that the most appropriate course of action is to recommend suspension of study. If suspension of study is recommended it is expected that the student would be advised to re-join the programme at the start of the equivalent Semester the following academic session in which the extenuating circumstances took effect.

In such circumstances the student is not required to take the advice of the ECP in which case an alternative submission date should be determined by the ECP by Chair's Action if necessary.

Students recommended suspension of study should be advised of the anticipated date they would re-join the programme and of the alternative submission date so that they have all pertinent information at once. They should also be advised to seek guidance from Student Support with respect to any financial impact or impact under Points-based Immigration System.

¹ *Taught Course Academic Regulations*, re-assessment regulations.

Outcome 6: Condonement

Very exceptionally, the ECP may make the following recommendations:

- a) that one or more fail marks up to a value of 40 credits are condoned and treated as a pass to allow for progression without the need to resit;
- b) that one or more fail marks up to a value of 40 credits are condoned and treated as a pass to allow for award calculation without the need for resit;
- c) that one or more fail marks up to a value of 40 credits are condoned for progression allowing the student to carry the fail(s) and resit at the next available opportunity.
- d) That one or more modules up to a value of 40 credits is removed from the award for the purposes of award classification.

Outcome 7: Effect on Award Classification

If it is considered by the ECP that the impact of the extenuating circumstances may have been such as to have had effect on overall performance and therefore on award classification, there will be one of two outcomes:

The Extenuating Circumstances Panel is not empowered to recommend that individual module marks are changed in order to change a classification outcome.

In very exceptional cases the ECP may consider that the seriousness and duration of the circumstances are such that they may have had an impact on overall performance and therefore potentially on award classification. In these exceptional instances, there are available one of two outcomes:

- (i) If the ECP considers that performance has been affected and this can be mitigated by implementing one of the courses of action in Outcome 6 above, it will implement such a course of action (e.g. removal of a module from classification etc.). The candidate's classification will be re-calculated and the revised calculation presented to the Board with a report that the extenuating circumstances have been taken into account.
- (ii) If the ECP considers that performance has been affected but is unable to mitigate this in a quantifiable way by applying a course of action from the list in Outcome 6 above, the panel will report to the Board of Examiners that the final judgement on the candidate should take into account extenuating circumstances which will be made known to the Chair of Board.

The candidate's profile will be considered on equal terms with other candidates by the full Board and the outcome of this consideration and the outcome of the Extenuating Circumstances Panel discussion will be factored into a judgement and final decision taken by the Chair of the Board.

Outcome 8: No applicable outcome.

The ECP may decide that there is no applicable outcome for the following reasons:

- (i) That it is judged that there has been no material impact on the student's performance.

- (ii) There is insufficient independent evidence to support the Extenuating Circumstances claimed;
- (iii) The evidence submitted is not convincing.

(In the event of (ii) and (iii) above the student will be invited to submit further evidence if they so wish when the ECP outcome is reported to them.)

7 Procedure for consideration of Extenuating Circumstances

7.1 Extenuating Circumstances Panel

- 7.1.1. The body with responsibility for the consideration of Extenuating Circumstances is the Extenuating Circumstances Panel (ECP). The ECP is a sub-committee of the Board of Examiners.
- 7.1.2 The ECP, directly or through delegated authority, is empowered to make decisions pertaining to Outcomes 1 – 2 and for these to be immediately communicated to the student and factored into assessments results reported to the Board of Examiners.
- 7.1.3 Decisions of the ECP pertaining to Outcomes 3 – 7 are reported as recommendations to the relevant School Board of Examiners to be taken into account when determining progression and award. The outcome of the Extenuating Circumstances claim is communicated to the student along with decision of the Board of Examiners.
- 7.1.4 The ECP will treat all information as confidential and recommendations to Boards of Examiners will be received by the Board by Student ID only.
- 7.1.5 The Terms of Reference for the Extenuating Circumstances Panel are attached as Annex A.

7.2 Delegated authority

- 7.2.1 The process for consideration of Extenuating Circumstances allows for certain claims for Extenuating Circumstances to be considered solely by a *Chair/nominated member of the ECP* not from the School of the claimant.
- 7.2.2 The basis of claims which can be considered under this delegated authority are determined by two factors: i) the adequacy of the evidence provided; ii) likely possible outcome.¹
- 7.2.3 With regard to factor i) the evidence must be clear and unequivocal in supporting the circumstances claimed.

With regard to factor ii) that the possible outcome will be in the range Outcome 1 – 2. If another outcome is deemed appropriate the application must be submitted to a full meeting of the ECP.
- 7.2.4 The decision on whether an Extenuating Circumstances claim can be considered under delegated authority of the ECP will be taken by Student Administration on the basis of the above factors and any other criteria deemed appropriate by the ECP.

¹ Requests for extensions to periods of Suspension of Study may also be considered under delegated authority on the basis of these criteria.

7.2.5 The decision from the individual(s) considering the claim will be submitted to the secretary of the ECP for report to the next meeting of the ECP. The decision can be immediately communicated to the student and the outcome factored into assessment results reported to Board of Examiners as necessary.

8 Right of Appeal / Re-application

8.1 Students will have the right of appeal against outcomes of extenuating circumstances consideration as follows:

- (i) Appeal against a decision taken by delegated authority will be referred to the ECP;
- (ii) Appeal against a decision of the ECP and/or School Board of Examiners through the University's Academic Appeals Procedure.

8.2 Re-Application

8.2.1 A student who has been granted a deferred assessment (Outcome 1) or further assessment/re-assessment opportunity (Outcome 3) but is unable to meet the requirements may submit a further application for Extenuating Circumstances provided that they supply evidence in support of their claim. The Extenuating Circumstances claim must be submitted in accordance with the published timescales.

8.2.2 Re-application for the same assessment(s) may be made for up to 3 successive occasions only; that is 4 in total (including the first Extenuating Circumstances application). If at this time a student is still unfit to attempt the assessment(s), the student's circumstances will be considered on an individual basis. Possible arrangements at this time may include agreement for a period of suspension of study and/or a requirement to repeat or re-start all or part of the period of study to which the assessment(s) apply.

8.2.3 In a circumstance where a student has had multiple instances of Extenuating Circumstances approved, the student may be requested to provide a certificate confirming 'fitness to study', to show that they are able to resume study.

8.2.4 In extreme circumstances the University may determine that the student is no longer able to benefit from undertaking academic study at the University and may withdraw the student. In such circumstances the student will be awarded the award to which their successfully attained credit entitles them to, including the possibility of an aegrotat unclassified award.

8.3 Cancellation of Extenuating Circumstances

Once an Extenuating Circumstances claim has been approved it remains in place until either:

- (i) written notification is submitted by the student to Student Administration that the student wishes to cancel their approved application. Such notification must be received 24 hours prior to the examination/assessment deadline in question; or
- (ii) in the case of deferred assessment, a piece of work is submitted by the student or they attend the examination.

8.4 Completion of first and deferred assessment attempts and re-assessment

First and deferred assessment attempts should normally be completed prior to the student undertaking any re-assessments.

9 Records

A record of Extenuating Circumstances Claims and decisions will be maintained by the secretary to the ECP in order to build a resource for case law, enable annual reporting and inform future review of the policy and procedure.

ANNEX A - Extenuating Circumstances Panel – Terms of Reference

1.1 Purpose

To consider applications for extenuating circumstances claims thus assisting the University in meeting its obligation to ensure that matters affecting student performance are considered fairly, consistently and equitably.

1.2 Membership

All Heads of Schools (including Director of Institute of Childhood & Education) in their capacity as Chairs of the School Board of Examiners (*ex officio*)
Director of Student Support (*ex-officio*)
One Chair of a Panel of Examiners from each School
One member of lecturing staff from each School
A member of Student Administration (Student Records)

In attendance: a member of Student Administration (Secretary) and a member of the Academic Administration Office.

1.3 Attendance and Quorum:

As a matter of principle each Head of School should normally be present in order to establish a level of consistency of treatment across Schools.

The quorum is 2 Heads of School plus four other members.

1.4 Chairing

The Chair of the ECP will be a Head of School not associated with the programme for which mitigation is being claimed. The business of the meeting will therefore be taken as follows:

- All claims from the Institute of Childhood and Education – Chair, Head of the School of Arts and Communication.
- All claims from the School of Arts and Communications – Chair, Head of School of Health and Social Sciences.
- All claims from the School of Health and Social Sciences – Chair, Director of Institute of Childhood and Education.

1.5 Scheduling of Meetings

Extenuating Circumstances Panels will be scheduled monthly during the academic session. If there is no business to be considered the meeting will be cancelled.

1.6 Delegated Authority

Nominated individuals (a Head of School or member of the ECP not from the School of the claimant) will have delegated authority to consider claims for Extenuating Circumstances on the following basis:

- i) the adequacy of the evidence provided;
- ii) likely possible outcome.

With regard to factor i) the evidence must be clear and unequivocal in supporting the circumstances claimed.

With regard to factor ii) that the possible outcome will be in the range Outcome 1 – 3. If another outcome is deemed appropriate the application must be submitted to a full meeting of the ECP.

The decision on whether an Extenuating Circumstances claim can be considered under delegated authority of the ECP will be taken by Student Administration in accordance with the above factors and any additional criteria determined by the ECP.

The decision from the individual(s) considering the claim will be submitted to the secretary of the ECP for report to the next meeting of the ECP.

1.7 The Powers of the ECP

The ECP is empowered to make decisions on the impact of extenuating circumstances on student performance, either as potential or actual impact.

These decisions will be reported to the relevant Board of Examiners as recommendations for the Board to take into account when determining progression and award.

ANNEX B – Processes

1.1 Application

Students wishing to apply for Extenuating Circumstances should complete an Extenuating Circumstances Application form which is available from Student Administration and via e: Vision help pages. Application forms must be completed in full and should include a copy of the independent supporting evidence. Students are responsible for payment of any fees associated with providing evidence in support of an extenuating circumstances claim.

Examples of admissible supporting evidence are listed below:

Reason	Admissible Evidence
Illness	Medical certificate from a doctor stating the nature, severity and duration of the illness.
Mental Health	Written confirmation from a counsellor stating the nature, severity and duration of the illness.
Crime (e.g. burglary)	Official police crime report.
Bereavement	Death Certificate/Notice of Service.
Motor Incident/Accident	Police report/hospital admission certificate.
Other	Written evidence from an independent third party who has first-hand knowledge of the situation, this may include Leeds Trinity Student Support and/or the Counselling Service.

1.2 Submission

Students should submit completed Extenuating Circumstances Applications to Student Administration. Application deadlines and a full list of Extenuating Circumstances Panel (ECP) dates are listed in the student guidance attached to the Extenuating Circumstances Application form.

1.3 Consideration

The Extenuating Circumstances Panel (ECP) is responsible for the consideration of Extenuating Circumstances applications but may delegate authority to make decisions pertaining to Outcomes 1-2. Decisions of the ECP pertaining to Outcomes 3 – 7 are reported as recommendations to the relevant School Board of Examiners to be taken into account when determining progression and award. In those circumstances where it would be detrimental to the student to wait for an Extenuating Circumstances Panel, decision may be sought by Chairs Action.

Possible Outcomes	
Outcome 1	Extension to the submission date for assessment(s) to the default period
Outcome 2	Alternative form of assessment
Outcome 3.1	A further opportunity for (re)assessment in module(s)
Outcome 3.2	Fail mark(s) are expunged and further first attempt(s) be allowed
Outcome 3.3	Submission penalties in one or more modules be reversed.
Outcome 4	Restart the year
Outcome 5	Suspend studies and return the following academic year
Outcome 6	Mark(s) to be condoned
Outcome 7	Consider the effect on award classification
Outcome 8	Request not upheld

1.4 Communication of outcomes

Student Administration will be responsible for communicating outcomes to students. Decisions made pertaining to Outcomes 1 – 2 will be communicated via email, usually within 7 working days of receipt of an application. Decisions made pertaining to Outcomes 3 – 8 will be communicated to students via e: Vision as part of published result communications. The dates for publication of results are available on the external website.