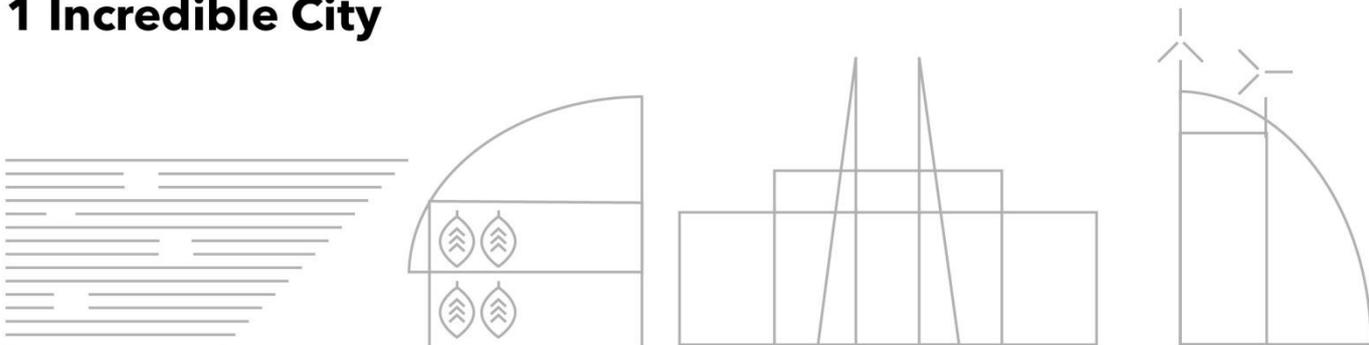


# Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure

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## Document Information:

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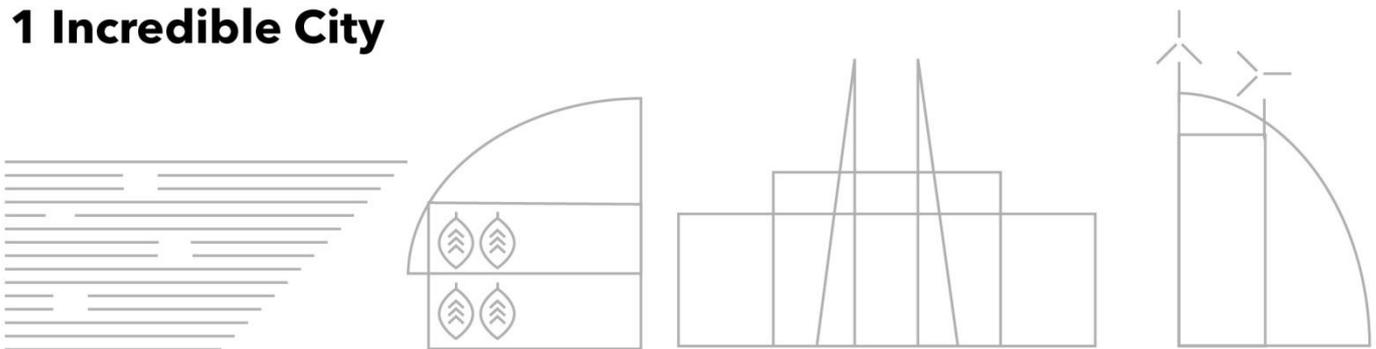
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## Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure

### 1 Policy Statement

- 1.1 The College will support students who are experiencing personal problems, for example, if you are ill, have been in hospital, have experienced an exceptional family emergency or are suffering from exceptional stressful life events, and they are having a significant impact on your ability to study.
- 1.2 Whilst studying with us you may encounter some of the difficulties of life experienced by most people, such as ill-health or personal issues. Normally you will be able to overcome or manage these without any impact on your ability to study and complete assessment.
- 1.3 Occasionally however you might experience ill-health or personal issues that are exceptional in nature and which have a significant impact on your ability to study and to complete assessment. We define these as extenuating circumstances. Generally such circumstances will occur suddenly, will be unexpected and are beyond your immediate control to overcome or manage due to their severity and/or timing.
- 1.4 Our policy is to help you where we can to mitigate the impact of your extenuating circumstances on your studies and to consider all requests for help sensitively, fairly and equitably.
- 1.5 *The following list indicates the type of **situations which do not meet** our definition of extenuating circumstances because we believe they can be avoided or that you can act to limit the impact. The list is not exhaustive.*

#### **Medical**

- long-standing medical conditions (as these should be covered by a Learning Contract)*
- planned health appointments*
- minor ailments such as a cold*

#### **Personal**

- the break-up of a short-term relationship*
- financial difficulties*
- attending or taking part in sporting events*
- holidays or travel*
- moving house*
- normal domestic issues*
- work commitments for fulltime students reducing time available for study and coursework*
- voluntary work*
- weddings*

#### **Study related**

- completing coursework too late and missing deadlines*
- losing coursework*

- not following the assessment timetable*
- transport difficulties which could have reasonably been avoided*
- withdrawal of IT facilities as a result of being in debt to the College*
- circumstances that affect another individual in relation to group work.*
- English being a second language*

## **2 Procedure**

- 2.1 It is important you inform us as soon as you are aware that your studies and/or ability to take assessment are being affected by ill-health or personal issues. You should normally contact your Curriculum Leader immediately if your circumstances are preventing you from attending classes or are affecting your ability to complete assessment. We understand you might not always feel comfortable doing this particularly when your circumstances are of a personal and sensitive nature. However we encourage you to do so. Any information you disclose will be handled in confidence.
- 2.2 The appropriate mechanism to help mitigate the impact of your circumstances will depend on the timing and severity of those circumstances.
- Where the circumstances occur close to a coursework submission deadline and are of the type that can quickly be overcome, you can request a short extension to that deadline. [see Annex 1]
  - Where your circumstances will prevent any sustained meaningful engagement with your studies, then you can request a planned break in studies. [see Annex 2]
  - Where your circumstances are having a detrimental impact on your ability to attempt or reach a pass standard in an assessment task, you can request to repeat your attempt at that assessment task (see Annex 3)
- 2.3 We will consider any request sensitively, fairly and equitably based on the extent to which you have:
- Submitted the request in a timely manner.
  - Clearly stated the nature of your circumstances and the impact they are having on your ability to study and take assessment.
  - Provided appropriate documentary evidence where it can be reasonably obtained.

	<b>ANNEX 1</b>
	<b>Requesting an extension to a coursework submission deadline</b>
1	It is your responsibility to be aware of your assessment schedule and to manage your time so that you can submit coursework by the published deadline. If you do not make a valid attempt at a task then you cannot pass the module/unit. If you are already at the referral stage this means you will fail the module/unit.
2	We would always encourage you to try and submit work to time, even when experiencing personal difficulties. Delaying a submission deadline can mean you will be completing coursework shortly before the date of an examination or other assessment task.
3	However, where your circumstances are preventing you from submitting coursework by the deadline but you believe you can complete within a week of that deadline, it might be in your best interests to request an extension.
4	Extension requests apply to coursework assessment tasks only. Other types of assessment, such as examinations and presentations, are held on fixed dates which cannot be moved. If your circumstances are affecting your ability to attend those assessments you will need to consider requesting another opportunity to take that task [see Annex 3].
5	You can request an extension by <b>completing form EER1 and taking it to your Curriculum Leader</b> . Requests must be submitted no later than 24 hours before the published deadline. Requests received after that time will not be considered.
6	The short-term nature of the circumstances applicable for extensions means it might not be possible for you to obtain documentary evidence to corroborate the circumstances you are reporting. However where we believe it is reasonable to expect evidence to be provided then you will be asked to do so.
7	Extensions are intended to allow you to complete coursework, not to start it. Therefore you are required to demonstrate you have made such progress that it is reasonable for your course leader considering your request to assume you would have completed on time had it not been for the circumstances reported.
8	<p>If your request is agreed you will be given an extension to the submission deadline.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Normally this will be for 5 working days (one week)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Exceptionally you may be given 10 working days (two weeks)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If the assessment task is a dissertation or similar large project you can be given an extension you may be given up to 20 working days (four weeks), so long as it is possible to mark/moderate before the review board deadline.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> You may also receive an extension which is longer than 10 days if required as an allowance in a learning contract.</li> </ul>
9	It will be your responsibility to meet the new deadline and no further extensions will be given. If you believe your circumstances have prevented you from making a valid attempt at the task despite receiving an extension, then you should consider requesting to repeat your attempt at that task (see Annex 3). You should be aware however that this will normally mean you will have to submit a new piece of work rather than continuing with the current one.

	<b>ANNEX 2</b>
	<b>Requesting a Planned Break in Studies</b>
1	When you join your course you should generally expect to study in consecutive years until you reach the end of the course, provided you meet the rules for progression to each level of study.
2	Generally we would encourage you to continue with your studies even when you are managing them alongside difficult and distressing personal issues which may occur. This will enable you to complete your course within the expected duration time. However where you believe extenuating circumstances will prevent sustained meaningful engagement with your studies it might be in your best interests to request that those studies are put on hold to the next academic year ( or next available intake where appropriate). By sustained meaningful engagement we mean a planned absence from teaching of at least four successive weeks.
3	It is important that you discuss your situation with your course leader ahead of any sustained period of absence, rather than during or after it. This is so we can give you timely and accurate advice about the implications of you taking a break in studies and plan the break so as to minimise any impact on teaching and assessment. We will not normally consider requests made after you have been absent for more than three weeks. You may however be directed towards other support mechanisms such as requesting another opportunity to take the outstanding assessment tasks.
4	In considering a request you should be aware that a break in study could affect matters such as student loans, tuition fees and international visas. You should seek advice and clarification where applicable from external bodies such as the Student Loans Company/Student Finance England, and the United Kingdom Borders Agency.
5	We will consider a request for a planned break in studies if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It is made ahead of a planned period of absence from teaching of at least four successive weeks.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It contains a clear and concise statement of your circumstances and why they will render you incapable of attending for a sustained period of time.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is supported by relevant independent documentary evidence where this can reasonably be provided.</li> </ul>
6	You should submit your request on the ' <b>Break in Study Application Form</b> '. It will be considered by the HE Senior Administrator and your Curriculum Leader on the basis of the information you provide. If your request is agreed you will be invited to a meeting to discuss your current academic profile, including which assessment tasks have been completed and which remain outstanding and the date on which you will resume your studies. The implications of taking a break in study will vary according to the timing of the break and the structure of your course. However the following principles will generally apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Once the break in studies has been formally agreed, you will not attend any further teaching or participate in any assessment activities for the remainder of the academic year.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> All marks already agreed by the Departmental Assessment Board will stand.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Any work already submitted for an assessment task will be marked and those marks will stand.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> You will resume your studies in the following academic year (or next available intake where appropriate) at the beginning of the semester/trimester in which you took the break.</li> </ul>

7	It will be your responsibility to resume your studies on the agreed date. In exceptional situations we will allow you to extend the break in studies for one additional year if there is evidence to demonstrate you are not well enough to return on this date. You should contact the HE Senior Administrator ahead of your return date if you feel unable to resume at that point.
8	<p>We will not agree a planned break in study if, after consideration of your circumstances, we feel it is reasonable to expect you to continue with your studies in the current academic year. We will also not agree the break if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The break in studies will take you beyond the maximum duration of your course.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Your course is about to close or be significantly revalidated meaning the current provision will not be available in the following academic year.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> You are in debt to the University regarding tuition fees.</li> </ul> <p>Where your request is refused a member of your Course Leader will meet with you to explain why and to discuss appropriate support mechanisms for the remainder of the academic year. This may include requesting an opportunity to take those assessment tasks you feel have been affected by your extenuating circumstances (see Annex 3).</p>
	<b>Maternity Leave</b>
9	If your planned absence is because you are pregnant you should read the Pregnancy and Maternity Policy for details about how to plan your absence and return to study.

	<b>ANNEX 3</b>
	<b>Requesting to repeat an attempt at an assessment task</b>
1	Registration on a module/unit entitles you to an initial opportunity to attempt all assessment tasks in that module/unit and one referral opportunity if you have not met the minimum pass criteria to pass the module/unit.
2	Generally we would encourage you to attempt all assessment tasks even if experiencing personal difficulties. The best time to take an assessment task is at the point is originally set, just after the teaching has been delivered, alongside the rest of your cohort and where the tasks forms part of a structured assessment schedule. However, where you believe your performance in assessment has been affected by extenuating circumstances then it might be in your best interests to request another opportunity to take the assessment tasks affected at a later date.
3	You can request to repeat an attempt at an assessment task if you believe that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Your circumstances have prevented you from making a valid attempt at the assessment task. A valid attempt is where you demonstrate engagement with the assessment task (for example, your coursework is capable of carrying a mark).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Or, whilst you have made a valid attempt, you believe your circumstances may prevent you from achieving the overall pass mark for the module, or the specific pass mark for the task (where this is a requirement).</li> </ul>
4	Repeat means the attempt affected by extenuating circumstances is restored: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If it was the initial attempt at the task then you will take the task again as if for the first time (classed as a deferral)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If it was the referral attempt at the task you will take the referral again with marks capped at 40% (classed as a deferred referral)</li> </ul>
5	Taking assessment tasks again will normally mean you having to submit a new piece of work or attend tests or presentations later in the year in the published re-assessment period for your course. If you have not completed all tasks by the end of an academic year it could prevent you from progressing to the next level of your course and will therefore extend the time needed to complete the course. We advise you to discuss the potential implications of delaying assessment with your Course Leader
6	You can request to repeat an attempt at an assessment task by <b>completing form RRAA</b> . This must be submitted to the Senior HE Administrator. It is important that we hear from you directly about how your circumstances have affected you. Therefore we do not allow requests to be submitted by third parties (for example a parent or a friend). If you are struggling to complete the form because of a particular condition then please speak to the HE Disability Advisor
7	Your request should be submitted within 7 calendar days of the submission deadline (for coursework) or date of examination or other assessment event. Requests received after this time will not be considered unless you can demonstrate that you were incapable of meeting our deadline. You will need to explain the reasons for the late request and give evidence where appropriate.
8	Your request must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A clear and concise explanation of your circumstances and the impact they have had on your performance in the assessment.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Details of whether you have previously reported your circumstances to your Course Leader.</li> </ul>

	<input type="checkbox"/> Relevant independent documentary evidence to support your claim where it can be provided.
9	<p>You should support your request with evidence to corroborate the nature and timing of the circumstances reported. Evidence from any accredited therapist or medical practitioner will be considered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Where your circumstances are such that we believe evidence can reasonably be obtained then we expect you to provide it. It is unlikely your request will be accepted otherwise. In some cases this evidence should relate specifically to the assessment period (for example time in hospital or an accident).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In other cases the evidence should confirm the circumstances reported even if not relating directly to an assessment period (for example you may be able to give medical evidence that confirms you are being treated for a particular condition).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Where your circumstances relate to the death of a close relative, certification of the death will be sufficient evidence to support your request.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> There are some circumstances where we understand that you will not be able to provide much or any corroborative evidence. This particularly applies to personal issues. In such situations we will expect you to have raised the issues with your Course Leader who will be asked to provide a statement about what you have told them.</li> </ul>
10	<p>We appreciate that the information you disclose to us will often be of a personal, private and sensitive nature. We assure you that it will be securely stored and only seen by those members of staff responsible for processing and considering your request.</p>
11	<p>Your request will be considered by an Extenuating Circumstances Panel (ECP). These panels have delegated authority from the HE Academic Board to decide on the validity of requests. ECPs are chaired by the Vice Principal for your department or their appointed representative and its membership includes the Head of Student Services (or nominee), and a Deputy Head of Learning. The constitution of the ECP requires any three members to be present for it to be quorate. You will receive the decision of the ECP via e-mail shortly after the date of the meeting at which your request is considered.</p>
12	<p>If the ECP accepts your request you will be able to repeat your attempt at the assessment task if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> You have not made a valid attempt at the assessment task or</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> You have made a valid attempt but you have not achieved the overall pass mark for the module (normally 40%)</li> </ul> <p><b>If you have passed the module/unit then you will not be able to repeat any task in that module/unit.</b></p>
13	<p>You will find out if you can repeat an attempt at an assessment task when you receive your results</p>
14	<p>If the ECP declines your request it will explain why. You should read the Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure for information about the grounds on which you may appeal this decision. You are advised to do this as soon as possible because the deadline for submitting an appeal is 10 working days from the date on which we send you the decision.</p>
	<p><b>Recurring Circumstances and Long-Term Conditions</b></p>
15	<p>We define extenuating circumstances as things that occur suddenly, unexpectedly and that are beyond your immediate control to overcome or manage. Circumstances which recur over more than one assessment period do not therefore meet this definition. This means requests relating to recurring circumstances will normally be accepted for one assessment period only. It is important therefore that</p>

	you take action to seek appropriate and timely support to help you manage your circumstances as your studies continue.
16	If you have a disability or long-term/recurrent medical condition which affects your learning and assessment you should seek advice from the Disabled Advisor, and if appropriate a learning contract will be negotiated. A learning contract is an agreement with you about how your studies and assessment requirements are supported.
17	We will not accept requests based on circumstances that are already covered in a learning contract. The exceptions to this are where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Reasonable adjustments to test/presentation conditions were not in place.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> There are disability-related reasons that are not covered in the learning contract.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The learning contract states that a deferral for an examination can be requested.</li> </ul>
	<b>Self-Certification</b>
18	You may use the self-certification procedure to report short periods of illness (1-5 days). This means you complete a formal written and signed declaration to confirm you have suffered a short illness lasting 1-5 consecutive days and which was severe enough to prevent you attending a fixed assessment event, such as a test or presentation.
19	You can use the self-certification process for a maximum of two absences in a particular semester and a maximum of three absences in an academic year.
20	If your period of illness is longer than five days, or if you have already used the self-certification process for the number of times as stated above, then you should seek medical advice and submit evidence as appropriate with your request.