

## Extenuating circumstances policy and procedure

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[Extenuating Circumstances Claim Form](#)

The above form can also be accessed via Moodle on the [Academic Procedures & Policies page](#).

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### List of appendices:

Appendix A - Table of Reasons

## 1. Context

This policy applies to both undergraduate students on Open University validated programmes and those studying on the Academy's internally awarded Foundation programme.

An Extenuating Circumstance is defined as a problem that a student has encountered which goes beyond the normal difficulties experienced in life and that has affected their academic performance adversely during the assessment period for which they are claiming. The Academy endeavours to ensure a fair and robust assessment procedure. To facilitate this we need to ensure that all our students receive equal opportunities to complete work to the best of their ability. This means we cannot allow one student longer to complete an assignment than another without good reason or penalty; it is not the intention of the extenuating circumstances procedure to mitigate failure or give students an unfair advantage over their peers. Illness or some other good reason may leave students unable to submit an assignment, but late submission is not a right (see **Appendix A** for table of reasons). Applications for consideration will normally be accompanied by a medical certificate or other written evidence.

Students are recommended to first discuss their circumstances with the relevant tutor or Programme Leader, their PAT or member of the Academic Team and should give due consideration to whether the circumstances are significant before submitting a form. The table at the end of this policy gives examples of reasons that are acceptable, reasons that may be considered and more importantly reasons that are likely to be unacceptable. It also provides examples of typical evidence that would need to be submitted to substantiate a claim. This table is for guidance only and will be referred to by staff when arriving at decisions.

**Note:** Where a student is aware that particular circumstances, be they work-related, family or financial problems, or any other issues, are likely to interfere with their ability to successfully complete their academic work at any time, it is open to the student to suspend/interrupt studies for a period (up to twelve consecutive months, which may be extended in exceptional circumstances) and to return to complete the programme of study when the problems are not so great.

Please see the [Withdrawal and Interruption of Studies Policy](#) for further details

It may also be possible for a student undertaking a full time programme to transfer to part time study so as better to balance academic and other commitments.

## **Students with Specific Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities and other (Short Term) Needs**

The Academy's aim is to ensure, as far as possible, a 'level playing field' by providing appropriate forms of support to enable students to undertake assessments and achieve the learning outcomes of modules. The Academy is committed to eliminating discrimination and providing equality of opportunity for students. The Alternative Assessment Policy has been developed to assist students who are disabled, have specific learning difficulties or have experienced exceptional medical or personal circumstances, by attempting to minimise any adverse impact on their study and performance in assessments.

Please see the [Alternative Assessment Policy](#) for further details and the [Alternative Assessment Arrangement Form](#).

### **1.1 Possible outcomes**

Extenuating Circumstance applications are considered by a panel (see 1.5.3). The panel can:

- Provide a student with the opportunity to take the affected assessment(s) as if for the first time i.e. a 'sit' or 'submit', allowing them to be given the full marks achieved for the examination or assessment, rather than imposing a cap;
- waive late submission penalties;
- determine that there is sufficient evidence of the achievement of the intended learning outcomes from other pieces of assessment in the module(s) for an overall mark to be derived;
- note the accepted extenuation for the module(s) and recommend that it is taken into account at the point of award and classification.

### **1.3 Submission of information on extenuating circumstances**

The Extenuating Circumstances Claim Form link is provided at the top of this document. Applications are considered by an Extenuating Circumstances Panel during the academic year. For their circumstances to be considered the student must complete an extenuating circumstances claim form and submit this, together with all required evidence and notify the Academic Programme Manager via email.

**Submission of extenuating circumstances for an extension must be submitted before the stated deadline for assessment or within seven calendar days of the circumstances, whichever is the sooner.**

### **1.4 Confidentiality**

The Academy understands that students may be reluctant to disclose confidential personal information. However, students can be assured that all claims of extenuating circumstances are deemed to be confidential to the Academic team, Extenuating Circumstances Panel and to the Examination and Progression Board and will not be disclosed outside those meetings (other than if they need to be considered as part of a student appeal).

If a student is reluctant to disclose information of a particularly personal nature, they may enter the word 'Confidential' on the form in the relevant boxes and attach written evidence in a sealed envelope. The information will then be made available only to the Chair of the Extenuating Circumstances Panel.

Records relating to Extenuating Circumstances are stored on the student's record confidentiality in line with the Academy's [Data Protection Policy](#) and [Data Retention & Disposal Schedule](#).

## **1.5 Consideration of extenuating circumstances: Extenuating Circumstances Panel**

Claims will be considered within seven working days of submission by the Extenuating Circumstances Panel, which works under the authority of the Examination and Progression Board. **Students will be advised of the decision regarding their claim within ten working days of submission.** Students are therefore advised to continue working on their submissions so that they do not waste the time if their application is deemed valid, particularly if their application is close to the original deadline date.

The Extenuating Circumstances Panel meeting is to determine whether the extenuating circumstances submitted are valid (that is, that they are exceptional, outside the student's control, and corroborated by appropriate independent documentary evidence). An Extenuating Circumstances Panel must accept the professional recommendation of a medical practitioner or qualified counsellor regarding the effect on a student of a particular condition or problem. But in the absence of an opinion as to the impact of the illness or condition the Extenuating Circumstances Panel may use its own judgement to determine whether the circumstances are likely to have had an impact on performance.

If a student fails, without good cause, to provide sufficient evidence to the Extenuating Circumstances Panel within the published timescales, the request will be rejected. Following each Extenuating Circumstances Panel, students will be sent a letter/email confirming the decision made regarding their Extenuating Circumstances application.

### **1.5.1 Claim accepted**

If a panel deems an application to be valid they will **normally grant an extension of ten working days**, but will decide timescales on an individual basis; all new deadlines will depend on how much work is required, availability of resources or other contributory factors.

Once the decision to accept the extenuating circumstances has occurred, the circumstances are considered to be 'spent'. In other words the acceptance and decision of the panel is judged to be the resolution of the matter. If the same circumstances continue, re-occur, or other circumstances arise which impact significantly on the ability of the student to complete subsequent assessments on time, a new extenuating circumstances application must be submitted.

The student will be informed of the outcome via email.

Where students have an ongoing verifiable cause that will affect their ability to meet further assessment deadlines, an application for alternative assessment arrangements can be made. Students should seek advice from their Programme Leader, PAT or the Academic Team.

The [Alternative Assessment Policy](#) and accompanying *Alternative Assessment Arrangement Form* can be found on [Moodle](#)

### 1.5.2 Claim rejected

Where the panel reject a claim for extenuating circumstances the original module deadline will apply (as will late penalties, where relevant). The student will be informed of the outcome by email.

### 1.5.3 Extenuating Circumstances Panel Membership:

- Director of Programmes (Chair)
- A Programme Leader (of a different programme to which the student is enrolled)
- Academic Programme Manager
- Academic Administrator (acting as Secretary)

### Terms of Reference

a) The Extenuating Circumstances Panel (ECP) reports to the Examination and Progression Board, to which it makes recommendations. The Board of Examiners will consider no other extenuating circumstances and no member of the Board of Examiners is permitted to make additional representations on behalf of students.

b) The panel will consider cases of extenuating circumstances submitted by students who feel that their performance in assessments may have been adversely affected. These circumstances will normally involve cases of illness, serious accident or bereavement – only exceptionally other factors as listed in column A of the table of reasons/ categories (**Appendix A**). Applications for consideration will normally be accompanied by a medical certificate or other written evidence which it is the role of the panel to scrutinise.

c) The panel can make the following recommendations to the Examination and Progression Board;

- Provide a student with the opportunity to take the affected assessment(s) as if for the first time i.e. a 'sit' or 'submit', allowing them to be given the full marks achieved for the examination or assessment, rather than imposing a cap;
- waive late submission penalties;
- determine that there is sufficient evidence of the achievement of the intended learning outcomes from other pieces of assessment in the module(s) for an overall mark to be derived;
- note the accepted extenuation for the module(s) and recommend that it is taken into account at the point of award and classification.

e) Extenuating circumstances applications considered by the panel will be monitored and a summary reported to the Academic Quality, Standards & Student Experience Committee (AQSSEC) and the Examination and Progression Board.

## 1.4 Consideration of extenuating circumstances: Examination and Progression Board

If the circumstances are deemed valid, this decision will be forwarded to the Examination and Progression Board who will take it into account. Extenuating circumstances may be taken into account not only where a student has failed an assessment or part of an assessment but also to take into account where student performance may have been impeded.

If extenuating circumstances are deemed valid, the Examination and Progression Board will normally offer a student another attempt at the assessment without penalty, thus if the assessment affected by

the circumstances was a first/second attempt, the student will be offered a sit/submit as if for the first/second time.

Under certain circumstances, the Examination and Progression Board may exercise discretion in deciding on the particular form any reassessment should take. Options include viva voce examination, additional assessment tasks designed to show whether the student has satisfied the programme learning outcomes, review of previous work, or normal assessment at the next available opportunity. The student should not be put in a position of unfair advantage or disadvantage over other candidates; the aim should be to enable the student to be assessed on equal terms.

Where the Examination and Progression Board has not been recommended by the Extenuating Circumstances Panel that the student has presented a valid case, the student does not have a right to re-sit as if for the first time.

## 2. Appeals

A student has the right to appeal against the decision of the Extenuating Circumstances Panel, as to whether or not to accept an Extenuating Circumstances claim. Such **appeals must be submitted within ten working days of the outcome of the extenuating circumstances claim** being communicated to the student and may be made on the following grounds:

- A material and demonstrable procedural irregularity in the Extenuating Circumstances process.
- Evidence that the Extenuating Circumstances Panel did not consider all the information available to it at the time of its consideration of the claim.

Appeals will not be considered on the following grounds:

- Dissatisfaction with the reasonable judgement of the Extenuating Circumstances Panel in its consideration of the Extenuating Circumstances claim,
- Late submission of an application for Extenuating Circumstances or late submission of evidence to support an application where there are no compelling grounds for why the application was made late.

Appeals should be made in writing in line with the Academic Appeals Procedure.

A student who has not submitted a claim of extenuating circumstances in line with this guidance will not normally be able to use extenuating circumstances as the basis for a subsequent appeal.

## 3. Contacts

Academic Programme Manager: [georgina@artacademy.ac.uk](mailto:georgina@artacademy.ac.uk)

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**Policies and documents that supplement and reference this document:**

- Quality Handbook
- Student Handbook
- Tutor Handbook
- Student Disciplinary policy and procedure
- Alternative Assessment Policy
- Academic Appeals Policy
- Withdrawal and Interruption of Studies Policy

Document name	Extenuating circumstances policy and procedure	Document owner	Darren Nairn Director of Quality & Student Experience
Date originally created	April 2018		
Version	6	Review date	July 2024
Author of amendments	Darren Nairn, Georgina Rowlands	Next review date	July 2026
Changes (list sections)	1.1, Addition of infectious diseases to table, Amendment of form change to Letter from Counselling Service (previously form), added website link to the Extenuating Circumstances form at top of document		
Approved by	Academic Board	Date of approval	July 2024 (AQSSEC)

## Appendix A - Table of reasons/ categories

Reason for EC Claim:	Category A: <i>Acceptable reason</i>	Category A: <i>Evidence required</i>	Category B: <i>Reasons that may be considered</i>	Category B: <i>Evidence required</i>	Category C: <i>Unacceptable reason</i>
<b>Serious Medical Condition</b>	Serious personal injury, medical condition, or mental health condition preventing attendance or completion of assessment or submission of work	Written evidence from a registered medical practitioner	Serious injury or illness to child, partner or close relative (parent)  Serious worsening or acute episode of an ongoing medical condition, mental health condition or disability	Written evidence of impact to claimant from registered medical practitioner	Ongoing medical conditions (including disabilities, learning difficulties or mental health conditions which are ongoing)  Minor illnesses or injuries (such as colds, headaches, hayfever)
<b>Infectious diseases (i.e. Covid, Flu)</b>	Self-isolation because of infection	Self-certification for a maximum of 5 working days.  Written evidence from a registered medical practitioner beyond 5 working days.			
<b>Bereavement</b>	Death of parent, (including step-parents and legal guardian) child, siblings, spouses or common law partners.	Written evidence from a professional such as Undertaker, Coroner or Registrar OR  Death Certificate	Death of close relative (not identified in Category A) or friend	Evidence identified in Category A AND  Written evidence of impact to claimant from registered medical practitioner	Death of Pet
<b>Trauma</b>	Victim of serious crime (e.g. rape, assault, mugging)  Theft of work required for assessment  Direct experience of terrorist incident or natural	Written corroboration of reported crime from Police or other investigating authority  Written evidence from registered medical practitioner, Police, Fire service or	Family breakdown (such as divorce)	Evidence from Solicitor AND/OR  Written evidence of impact to claimant from registered medical practitioner	Minor crime  Financial problems or employment difficulties  Accommodation problems or house moves  General domestic / family problems  Assessment Exam stress

	disaster Major fire in residence	Academy Facilities Manager			
<b>Caring Responsibilities</b>			Unexpected caring responsibilities caused by sudden serious illness or worsening of ongoing medical condition to child, partner or close relative	Written evidence from patient's registered medical practitioner AND  Written evidence of impact to claimant from registered medical practitioner	Ongoing caring responsibilities  Caring responsibilities for minor illnesses, accidents or injuries
<b>Court Attendance</b>	Jury Service or attendance at court or tribunal as a witness, defendant or plaintiff	Official correspondence from Court or Tribunal Authority			Supporting friend or relative at Court or Tribunal
<b>Miscellaneous</b>			Serious disruption caused by terrorist incident or natural disaster	Evidence of serious disruption to travel or other plans preventing attendance at or completion of assessment or submission of work AND/OR  Written evidence of impact to claimant from registered medical practitioner	Any circumstances which have not clearly impacted on academic performance or do not clearly relate to the timing of the assessment  Visa problems  Failing of IT or technical equipment  Minor private or public transport failure, holidays or booked travel arrangements