



University
Centre
Somerset

Part of Bridgwater & Taunton College

HIGHER EDUCATION

HE EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES POLICY

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of the Higher Education Extenuating Circumstances policy is to provide Higher Education students with the ability to apply for additional time to submit their work due to circumstances that are beyond their control.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

2.1 The objective of the policy is to:

- Provide students with a range of extensions that best meet their needs
- Provide University Centre Somerset with sufficient information to support the student with their studies
- Ensure a fair and transparent approach to agreeing extensions

3. SCOPE

3.1 This Extenuating Circumstances policy applies to all students studying on taught programmes that lead to an Oxford Brookes University, The Open University or Pearson Higher National award studied at University Centre Somerset. University of the West of England and University of Plymouth students will follow the Extenuating Circumstances policies of their respective Universities. (These can be found on their websites).

3.2 The criteria for what University Centre Somerset considers to be an Extenuating Circumstance (EC) is as follows:

- Any personal circumstances that are out of the control of the student.
- Any personal circumstances that the student could not reasonably have prevented or accommodated.
- Any personal circumstances that have had a significant and demonstratively negative effect on the student's ability to study or undertake an assessment.

3.3 Long Term Health Conditions (LTHC)

A long-term health condition is a mental or physical condition that

- is persistent, typically lasting for more than three months and is often life-long
- cannot be resolved in a short time, or which will recur regardless of action, or which needs to be managed on a long-term basis
- may require students to seek help with some activities but is not otherwise disabling
- can be managed but can 'flare-up'

Students can tell us about their long-term health condition, with evidence, providing clear confirmation of the nature, severity, duration and effect of the condition.

If they subsequently experience a flare-up of the condition affecting their ability to attend or complete an assessment, they must submit an extenuating circumstances claim for the specific assessment(s), detailing how the flare-up is affecting their ability to complete the assessment(s). However, we will not ask them to provide any further evidence of their condition, if normally required, for every claim.

4. DIFFERENT TYPES OF ASSESSMENT DEADLINES

4.1. Extenuating Circumstances can be used for different assessment types which have been placed into 3 broad categories:

- **Deadline assessments,**
- **Non-examined event assessments**
- **Examined event assessments.**

a) **Deadline assessments (Coursework)** – assessments not taken under controlled and timed conditions such as essays, assignments and placements.

b) **Non – examined event assessments** - assessments taken under controlled and timed conditions such as, tests and presentations, (but not formal examinations which are covered below)

c) **Examined event assessments (Exams)** – formally examined assessments taken under controlled and timed conditions, such as exams.

4.2. There are four types of application a student can make under this policy, as follows:

- a) **Type A** - an extension of 24 hours: for **'deadline' (coursework) assessments only**. Students must provide a reason however no evidence is required; applications are logged, but approval is automatic.
- b) **Type B** - an extension of up to 10 calendar days for **'deadline' and non-examined 'event' assessments**. Students must provide a reason, however no evidence is required; applications are logged and subject to approval.
- c) **Type C** - an extension beyond 10 calendar days for **'deadline' and non-examined 'event' assessments**. Applications must be supported by evidence; they are logged and subject to approval.
- d) **Type D** - a resit of an **examined event assessment** such as a formal written examination (or a retake of the module if the affected event assessment was a resit). Students who become ill during an event assessment are required to notify a staff member immediately and should self-certify within 48 hours of the assessment.

4.3 All claims for consideration of extenuating circumstances should be submitted via the on-line application form as soon as the circumstances become apparent and preferably ahead of the assessment deadline or the start of the event assessment. Any required supporting evidence must be supplied within ten working days of the initial application.

4.4 Students are responsible for submitting accurate information and evidence. Any student suspected of submitting dishonest claims will be referred to the Student Conduct & Disciplinary procedure.

4.5 Personal information submitted by students as part of a claim will be stored on the student's Individual Learning Plan (ILP) but access will be restricted to staff who need to be aware of any disclosure of circumstances that have been made. Students can see what records are being kept through Pro Portal.

5. TYPE A APPLICATION

- 5.1. Students are responsible for submitting all work for deadline assessments by the specified deadline. However, University Centre Somerset acknowledges that very occasionally things can go wrong at the last moment. Students who are unexpectedly unable to sit a non-examined event assessment or hand in a deadline assessment are permitted to register for a 24-hour extension via the online portal. Approval of such requests is automatic, and students using the 24-hour extension will have access to the full range of marks for the assessment.
- 5.2. Students must register that they are using Type A extension using the relevant application form. Students must provide a reason, but they are not required to provide any supporting evidence. This must be done *within* 24 hours of the assessment deadline.
- 5.3. It is expected that most students will never need to use the Type A extension as working to deadlines is a skill that most students will have developed in their previous studies. Repeated use may lead University Centre Somerset to question the student's fitness to study.

6. TYPE B APPLICATION

- 6.1. Students who require a longer extension (up to a maximum of 10 working days) for a non-examined event assessment, deadline assessment or examined event assessment should apply for a Type B extension via the application portal. Students must provide a reason for an extension of up to 10 days however they are not required to provide any supporting evidence. Students will have access to the full range of marks; however, applications are logged and are subject to approval.
- 6.2. It is expected that most students will never need to use the Type B extension as the chances of unexpectedly being affected by circumstances that prevent a student from sitting an assessment or handing in an assignment by the deadline are low. Repeated episodes where a student cannot sit an event assessment or hand in work by the deadline may lead University Centre Somerset to question the student's fitness to study.

7. TYPE C APPLICATION

- 7.1. Students who require an extension of more than 10 days must submit a full Type C application, supported by evidence, which will be considered by a panel. The panel will consist of a Chair and one other member. Where the panel decision is unable to reach a consensus the view of a third member will be sought. The panel may liaise with programme teams regarding appropriate deadlines and appropriate outcomes.
- 7.2. Students are expected to supply full information in their initial claim and follow up with supporting evidence within 10 working days. All claims that meet the administrative requirements of the process will be considered in full and therefore subsequent claims for the same period are unlikely to be considered unless there is significant new information which the student, for valid reasons, could not have provided previously.
- 7.3. Students are encouraged to submit their application in advance of the assessment deadline. However, the deadline for submitting an on-time extenuating circumstances claim is 48 hours after the start of the event assessment or 48 hours

after the deadline for a deadline assessment. Any claim made more than 48 hours after the deadline will be considered a late application and will not be valid.

- 7.4. Students will be notified of the outcome of their application as soon as possible, normally within five working days of submitting a completed application and associated evidence.
- 7.5. Extenuating circumstances are expected to be rare. When considering an application, the panel may view it in the context of the student's previous applications for extenuating circumstances.

8. TYPE D APPLICATION

- 8.1. Type D applications should be used to request a resit if a student has exceptional circumstances which prevented them from sitting an **examined event assessment** (or a retake of the module, if the affected event assessment was a resit). Students who become ill during an event assessment are required to notify a staff member immediately and should self-certify via the online portal within 48 hours of the assessment. In such circumstances. Any work undertaken prior to leaving the assessment will not be marked as the student will be assumed to be declaring themselves not fit to sit the assessment. Type D applications are subject to approval.

9. POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

- 9.1. Type A applications are automatically approved, and the extra time allowed will be 48 hours.
- 9.2. For Type B applications, the student will normally be able to take the assessment later (up to 10 calendar days), with access to the full range of marks.
- 9.3. All Type C and D applications will be assessed by a panel and either accepted or declined. If they are accepted, the following outcomes are possible:
 - (a) Extra time to prepare for a deadline assessment or to carry out placement requirements - the amount of extra time will normally be determined by the amount of time a student has been affected by the exceptional circumstances. Extra time will be in addition to any automatic extension a student has via any inclusive support plans.
 - (b) An opportunity to take the assessment at a later date, with access to the full range of marks. This might not be possible depending on the module and course requirements. The decision will consider any achievement in other components.
- 9.4. Most assessment submissions are completed online and computers are available at University Centre Somerset. Therefore, if extra time is given, it is expected the student will submit their work on or before the revised submission date, even if it is not considered a 'working day' for University Centre Somerset. Only if there is a need for an assessment to be physically handed in should this date be amended and this should be agreed with the Module Leader in advance.

10. LATE APPLICATIONS

- 10.1. Any late application must contain a valid reason why it could not be submitted within the deadline.

10.2. University Centre Somerset will consider these on a case by case basis though the Extenuating Circumstances Panel.

11. REVIEW

11.1. All requests for a review must be submitted to he@btc.ac.uk within ten working days of the issue of the original decision. Requests for a review submitted more than ten working days after the original decision was issued are unlikely to be considered.

11.2. For a review to take place, a student must demonstrate one or more of the following grounds:

- There is evidence to suggest that the request was not considered in accordance with these procedures
- There is evidence to suggest that there was an administrative error or some other irregularity in the consideration of the request.
- New material evidence is available which the student was unable, for good reason, to provide earlier in the process

11.3. If the above grounds are not met, the review will not be considered. A review will be undertaken by a member of the HE Team who was not a part of the panel that considered the original claim.

12. ACADEMIC APPEAL

12.1. Students may formally appeal the decision of an Extenuating Circumstances Panel or outcome of a Review. This will follow the process set out in the Academic Appeals Policy. An academic appeal can only be submitted on the following grounds:

- There is evidence to suggest that the request was not considered in accordance with these procedures
- There is evidence to suggest that there was an administrative error or some other irregularity in the consideration of the request.
- The decision reached, or the outcome, was unreasonable
- New material evidence is available which the student was unable, for good reason, to provide earlier in the process
- There is a reasonable perception of bias during the process

12.2. Academic Appeals should normally be made within ten working days of the date of the email communicating the extenuating circumstances decision or within ten working days of the result of the Review.

12.3. However, if a student wishes to claim for extenuating circumstances for a taught module after the formal publication of results at the end of the year, this will be dealt with as an appeal against the decision of an Award Board. In this case, students must submit their appeal by the deadline specified when the results are published. To submit an appeal students must complete the appeal form and submit it, with any supporting evidence, to HE@btc.ac.uk. Any academic appeal against the decision of an Award Board which is raised based on extenuating circumstances, must contain a valid reason to explain why information could not have been submitted at the time. Reference should be made to the HE Academic Appeals Policy.

13. OFFICE FOR THE INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATOR

- 13.1. If the student has completed University Centre Somerset's internal Review procedure for consideration of exceptional circumstances and they are still dissatisfied with the outcome, they should follow the University Centre Somerset Academic Appeals Policy. If they are still dissatisfied, they may be able to refer their case to the relevant University partner or Pearson.
- 13.2. If following the end of this process, either through University Centre Somerset or through the University partner or Pearson, the student is still dissatisfied, they can request a Completion of Procedures Letter and may be eligible to raise the matter with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education [Students - OIAHE](#). Details can be found in the Academic Appeals Policy.

14. EVIDENCE

- 14.1. Applications (except for Type A and Type B requests) should be supported by appropriate evidence. The nature of evidence will vary depending on the circumstances, but it must:
- confirm the existence of the extenuating circumstances and the relevant timeframe;
 - confirm the impact of the extenuating circumstances on the student concerned;
 - be comprehensible for the panel.
- 14.2. The panel reserves the right to request clarification regarding particular evidence, or ask for further evidence. Requests may include, but are not limited to:
- extra supporting documentation;
 - the evidence being sent directly from a third party;
 - the translation of documents into English, as required.

15. REPEATED USE OF THE EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES PROCESS

- 15.1. University Centre Somerset has a responsibility to monitor the progress of students throughout their studies and intervene where progress is not being made at the expected rate. Where a student is not moving through the levels of their studies at the expected rate because their circumstances are causing them to make multiple applications for exceptional circumstances, University Centre Somerset may contact the student to identify any underlying issues or additional support needs. In certain circumstances, it may be appropriate for University Centre Somerset to commence the Fitness to Study procedure.

16. VALID AND NON-VALID REASONS

- 16.1. For **Type B** and **C** applications the following is a guide to what is, and is not, considered a valid reason.

Examples of circumstances which **would normally be considered valid**:

- Issues relating to COVID-19.
- Your own health problems, including major accident or injury, acute ailments, hospitalisation (including for operations), or those affecting a significant period of study.
- Personal or psychological problems for which you are receiving counselling, or have been referred to a counsellor or similarly qualified practitioner.

- Clinical depression or other significant mental health issue.
- Pregnancy-related conditions and childbirth (including a partner in labour).
- Bereavement causing significant impact.
- Separation or divorce of yourself or your parents.
- Recent burglary, theft or serious car accident.
- Jury service which cannot be deferred.
- Representing the University Centre Somerset or one of our partner Universities at national level, or your country at international level, or participation in an event that is of benefit to University Centre Somerset's national or international reputation.
- Exceptional pressure of work or permanent change of employment circumstances.
- Late diagnosis of, for example, dyslexia, meaning you have not had the appropriate support for assessment, including provision in exams.
- Disruption in an exam or assessment, such as a fire alarm going off, or excessive noise from building works.
- A significant change to your financial circumstances after enrolment, such as withdrawal of Student Finance England (SFE) funding or its equivalent mid-year.
- Interviews for placements, but only in cases where you have asked the employer or provider to reschedule, but this has not been possible.
- Significant positive life events, such as weddings of close family members, where you can show that no alternative arrangement, such as the date or your attendance, is possible.
- Computing problems, such as corrupt data or media, poor internet connectivity, printer failure, or e-submission of an assessment file in an incorrect format, or lack of access to IT facilities.
- Problems with postal or other third-party delivery of work.

Examples of circumstances which would **not normally be considered valid**:

- You slept in or your alarm clock did not go off.
- Accidents or illness affecting relatives or friends, unless serious, or you are a sole carer.
- Financial problems, including debt sanctions imposed by University Centre Somerset / Bridgwater & Taunton College, but excluding cases of exceptional hardship or significant changes in financial circumstances since enrolment.
- Family celebrations, holidays, house moves, or similar events, in which you have input to, or control over, the date or may choose not to participate.
- Appointments of any kind, including legal or medical appointments, which could be rearranged.
- Sporting, recreational or voluntary commitments, unless you are representing University Centre Somerset at national level or your country at international level, or participating in an event that is of benefit to University Centre Somerset national reputation.
- For full-time students, normal pressures of employment, because, by enrolling as a student, you have made a commitment to make time available to study.

17. REVIEW OF POLICY

- 17.1 The policy will be reviewed by the SMT Policy Review Group and will also be provided to the Senate who oversee HE at University Centre Somerset.