UCQ
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CENTRE QUAYSIDE

# Extenuating Circumstances Policy

Version: 9
Revision date: 30/01/2026
Document reviewer: Head of Policy & Governance
Due for review: 30/01/2028

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# 1. Purpose

1.1 This policy serves to address situations where students face unforeseen and exceptional challenges that may impact their academic performance. These circumstances could include serious personal illness or injury, family emergencies, bereavement, or other extraordinary events beyond the student's control. The purpose of this policy is to provide a mechanism for students to request consideration or accommodations when facing these challenging situations. It recognises that life events can significantly affect a student's ability to meet academic responsibilities and complete coursework. The Extenuating Circumstances Policy is designed to ensure fairness and flexibility by allowing students to explain their situations and request adjustments to standard academic policies. For the purposes of this policy, 'extenuating circumstances' includes both extenuating and mitigating circumstances as per the definitions below.

# 2. Scope

2.1 This policy covers both extenuating and mitigating circumstances and applies to enrolled students who are facing unexpected and significant challenges that may impact their academic performance. Academic staff should signpost to this policy as required.

# 3. Definitions

3.1 **Extenuating circumstances**
Extenuating circumstances refer to factors or situations that partially excuse or justify certain actions or outcomes. These circumstances are often unexpected, beyond the individual's control, and may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the situation.

3.2 **Mitigating circumstances**
Mitigating circumstances also refer to factors that may reduce the severity or impact of a particular situation. These factors may not necessarily excuse the behavior or event but are considered to lessen the overall culpability. Mitigating circumstances focuses on factors that, while not justifying behavior, may reduce the severity of consequences, particularly in legal or disciplinary situations.

# 4. Policy statement

4.1 UCQ takes into account extenuating circumstances which can impact on a student's academic progress. A student may encounter significant personal difficulties that are outside their control and impact on their ability to study and/or complete assessments. This policy provides the procedure to follow when dealing with extenuating circumstances for all types of students on all courses.

**4.2 Responsibilities**

All students are responsible for ensuring initial applications for extenuating circumstances are made in line with this Policy. The Academic Misconduct and Extenuating Circumstances (AMEC) Sub-Committee is responsible for the consideration of all applications and recommendations to the Board of Examiners.

## 5. Tutor discretionary extensions

5.1 Exceptionally, a module tutor is able to offer a short-term extension of up to 5 working days. Tutor discretionary extensions must be requested by the student no later than **24 hours prior** to the assessment submission date (at 23:59 GMT). Tutor discretionary extensions do not apply to examinations. Where the request is granted, the tutor **must** inform UCQ by emailing extenuating@ucq.ac.uk and providing the details of the tutor 5 working day discretionary extension.

5.2 Where the student claims a tutor discretionary extension, they **cannot** make an additional claim for extension using the self-certification method (see 8.3).

## 6. Eligibility criteria

6.1 For a difficulty to be considered an extenuating circumstance it must meet the following criteria:

- the difficulty must be out of the student's control and could not have been prevented by the student;
- the difficulty must have had a demonstrably detrimental impact on the student's ability to undertake study, workplace learning or undertake an assessment;
- the timing of the circumstance must be relevant to the claimed impact

## 7. Types of circumstances

7.1 The following is a non-exhaustive list of circumstances which are **likely** to be considered as extenuating circumstances:

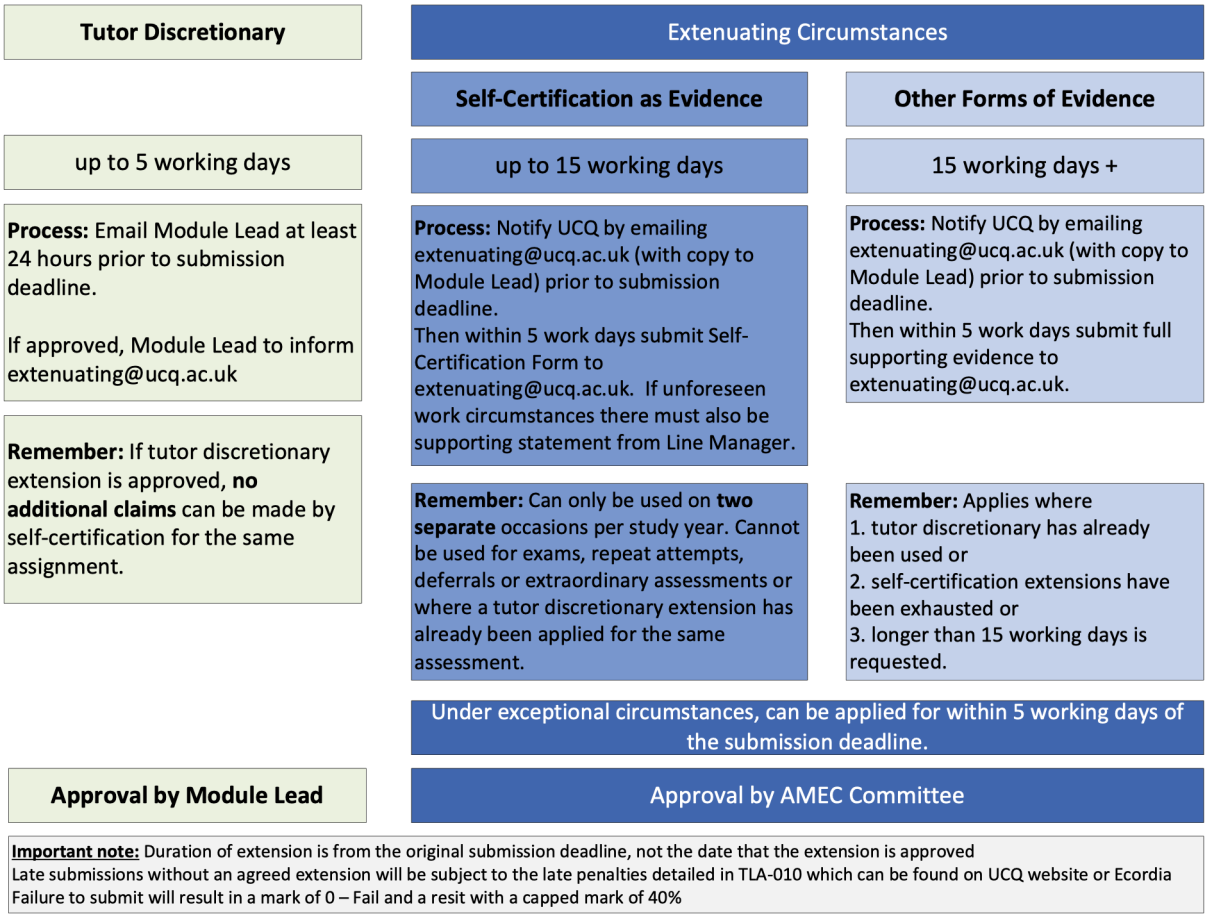
- Bereavement
- Serious short-term illness/accident/hospitalisation
- Deterioration or fluctuation of a disability or long-term health condition
- Significant adverse personal/family circumstances
- Other significant exceptional factors for which there is evidence of stress caused
- Exceptional unforeseen work commitments (limited to self-certification option only and requires line manager supporting evidence)

7.2 The following is a non-exhaustive list of circumstances which are **unlikely** to be considered as extenuating circumstances:

- Failure of the Turnitin submission portal when submitting assessment (under these circumstances students should submit assessment via assignments@ucq.ac.uk instead)
- Medical circumstances without supporting medical documentation/evidence
- Medical circumstances which do not relate to the assessment period in question
- Minor illness or ailment, which in a work situation would be unlikely to lead to absences from work
- If there is a reasonable case that the circumstance was foreseeable and/or preventable
- Financial issues
- Religious observance
- Holiday or family events
- Transport difficulties
- Late disclosure of circumstances

- Poor time management
- Missing exams or assessments due to misreading the examination/assessment timetable or oversleeping
- Loss of computer data/printer problems
- Submitting the wrong work for the assessment or submitting a draft version in error
- A long-term condition where treatment or additional support/arrangements are in place to mitigate

## 8. Process




8.1 If a student is unable to attend an examination or other assessment event because of extenuating circumstances, they must inform their Module Lead and Professional Development Assessor as soon as possible, before the examination date or the assessment deadline, unless prevented to do so by circumstances outside of their control, which they must document.

8.2 At the same time, the student must also notify the Academic Misconduct and Extenuating Circumstances (AMEC) Sub-committee of their intention to make a request under the Section 6 eligibility criteria. In an exceptional case, where an assessment deadline has already passed, this notification must be made within 5 working days of the missed deadline. Notification to the AMEC should be made by emailing extenuating@ucq.ac.uk. Once the AMEC has been notified, the student must submit all supporting evidence for their claim within 5 working days. All supporting evidence must be emailed to extenuating@ucq.ac.uk. Where an application does

not meet the Section 6 eligibility criteria, the application will be rejected, and the applicant will be informed in writing.

8.3 A student may provide self-certification as supporting evidence for their application. For all exceptional unforeseen work commitments (see 7.1), self-certification applications must be accompanied by the relevant Line Manager's supporting statement, explaining the circumstances and estimating the duration of the extenuating circumstances. Self-certification may only be submitted on up to **two separate** occasions per academic year, and only to request a short extension (15 working days) to an original assessment deadline submission. Applicants must complete Appendix A: Self-Certification Form if they wish to apply for an extension using the self-certification option. A self-certification cannot be used for examinations, repeat attempts, deferrals, extraordinary assessments or where a tutor discretionary extension has already been applied for the same assessment.

8.4 Where self-certification is used, no additional evidence will be required at the point of application, unless claiming an exceptional unforeseen work commitment. For claims of exceptional unforeseen work commitments, a statement from the Line Manager is also required. Supporting evidence must be submitted for consideration alongside all other claims. For medical circumstances, medical evidence must be provided by a qualified medical practitioner (e.g. GP). UCQ will verify the authenticity of any evidence submitted. The AMEC may request additional evidence during the process of their consideration.

## 9 Outcome for eligible applications

9.1 There are two possible outcomes to the Extenuating Circumstances request: acceptance or rejection (see eligibility criteria section 6). Where the request has been accepted by the AMEC, the AMEC will recommend to the Board of Examiners whether or not to:

- Provide the 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 and provide a new assessment deadline date;
- 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.

9.2 Where an agreed number of extension days has been recommended by the AMEC (e.g. 15 working days), these will be counted from the original deadline date, not the date that the claim was made, nor the date that any supporting evidence was submitted to the AMEC.

9.3 The Board of Examiners, depending on the circumstances, may exercise discretion in deciding on the particular form any reassessment should take. Options include a 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 will not be put in a position of unfair advantage or disadvantage: the aim will be to enable the student to be assessed on equal terms with their cohort.

9.4 The module marks released following the meeting of the Board of Examiners should clearly identify results where extenuation has been considered and applied.

9.5 If a student fails, without good cause, to provide the AMEC with sufficient information about extenuating circumstances within the timescales specified in this policy, the AMEC has authority to reject the request on those grounds.

## 10 Compliance and enforcement

10.1 When considering applications for extenuating circumstances, the AMEC must ensure this policy is followed consistently and fairly. The AMEC must prioritise the confidentiality of students' personal information related to extenuating circumstances. Staff involved in the review process should handle this information with sensitivity and discretion.

10.2 The AMEC must maintain accurate records of extenuating circumstances requests, decisions and any accommodations granted.

## 11 Training and communication

11.1 Members of the AMEC will receive training as required. Ongoing support will be provided by the Board of Examiners.

11.2 This Policy will be made available on the UCQ website for all students and staff to access.

## 12 Review and revision

12.1 This Policy will be reviewed every two years, or earlier as required to ensure best practice.

## 13 Document history

| ISSUE NO. | DATE | PAGE | REVIEWER | DETAIL OF AMENDMENT |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 08 | 02/02/2024 | 3, 5, 6, 7 | Tara Henderson | Policy revised to fit recommended document template as specified in quality procedure QP02. Sections 1, 2, 3, 4.2, 10, 11, 12 & 13 added. Infographic added under Section 8 for clarity of process.<br>Para 8.2 Removed wording *"or did not keep to the required timeframes stated in this Policy"* due to duplication in para 9.5. |
| 09 | 30/01/2026 | All | Tara Henderson | Periodic review conducted. Minor updates made to formatting and paragraph referencing. No further changes made. |

## 14 Initial equalities impact assessment

| **Department:** All | **Completed by:** Tara Henderson, Head of Policy & Governance | **Date of initial assessment:** 9 September 2021 |
|---|---|---|
| **Area to be assessed:** | TLA-006 Extenuating Circumstances Policy | |
| **Existing or new policy/procedure:** | Existing | |
| **What evidence has been used to inform the assessment and policy? (please list only)** | | |
| **External guidance and requirements:**<br>➢ Open University expert reader review<br>➢ QAA UK Quality Code; *Assessment*<br>**Internal guidance and requirements:**<br>➢ Consultation with Vice Principal and Academic Programme team members | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1. Describe the aims, objectives or purpose of the policy/procedure** | | UCQ takes into account extenuating circumstances which can impact on a student's academic progress. A student may encounter significant personal difficulties that are outside their control and impact on their ability to study and/or complete assessments. This policy provides the procedure to follow when dealing with extenuating circumstances for all types of students on all courses. | | |
| **2. Which stakeholders/groups are intended to benefit from this policy/procedure?** | | All HE students and staff | | |
| **The Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to have 'due regard' to the need to:-**<br>(1) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization<br>(2) Advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and<br>(3) Foster good relations between different groups | | **3. Could the policy/procedure have a disproportionately negative effect impact in terms of the aims set out in (1) to (3) of the Act on any of the protected characteristics?:-**<br>**High**<br>**Medium**<br>**Low**<br>**No effect** | **4. Briefly explain how the policy/procedure furthers or prevents the aims set out in (1) to (3).** | **5. If there is a disproportionately negative impact on any protected characteristics, can it be justified on the grounds of promoting equality or any other reason? If yes, please explain.** |
| **Protected characteristics** | **Age** | No effect | Not applicable | Not applicable |
| | **Disability** | Low | A long-term condition where treatment or additional support/arrangements are in place to mitigate is unlikely to be considered under this policy. | Justified on the grounds for promoting equality amongst all students.<br><br>Whilst listed as unlikely, all circumstances are considered on a case by case basis. |
| | **Gender** | No effect | Not applicable | Not applicable |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Gender reassignment** | No effect | Not applicable | Not applicable |
| | **Marriage and Civil Partnership** | No effect | Not applicable | Not applicable |
| | **Pregnancy and Maternity** | No effect | Not applicable | Not applicable |
| | **Race** | No effect | Not applicable | Not applicable |
| | **Religion or Belief** | Low | Religious observance is unlikely to be considered under this policy. | Justified on the grounds for promoting equality amongst all students.<br>Whilst listed as unlikely, all circumstances are considered on a case by case basis. |
| | **Sexual Orientation** | No effect | Not applicable | Not applicable |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **6. Has there been any consultation/engagement with the appropriate protected characteristics?** | | Not applicable |
| **7. What action(s) will you take to reduce any disproportionately negative impact, if any?** | | All circumstances are considered on a case by case basis. |
| **8. Based on the information in sections 1 to 7, should this policy/procedure proceed to Full Impact Assessment?** (recommended if one or more 'High' under section 2) | | No |
| **Assessor signature:** | **Approved by:**<br>**Michelle Elliott** | **Date approved:**<br>09/09/2021 |