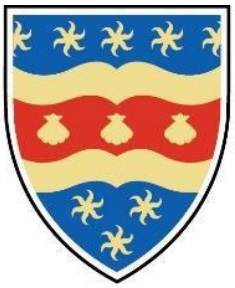
*This regulation applies to all students in all UoP sites of delivery and in all UK and international partnerships, unless non-standard regulations have been formally approved.*



UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

# Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedures 2026-27

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# 1. Introduction

We (the University) want you (our students) to have the best possible opportunities to demonstrate your academic abilities through the assessments we set. During your studies, there may be times when you face exceptional situations that:

- have an impact on your ability to attend or complete your assessments at the usual time, and
- are outside of your control or you could not reasonably have predicted

We refer to these exceptional situations as "Extenuating Circumstances", often shortened to ECs, and as they are only relevant to truly exceptional circumstances, we anticipate that students will only need to apply on rare occasions.

Normally you will be able to reasonably predict if the situation impacting you relates to religious observance and/or military duties so we have separate guidance for this.
If you are affected by extenuating circumstances, we want to support you and can take these circumstances into account by allowing you to, for example:

- Submit your coursework assessment five working days later than the published deadline, or
- Not submit your assessment at the usual time, but have an opportunity to be assessed later, or
- Not attend a time-specific assessment (for example, an examination, a test, a presentation or performance, a quiz, or field class), but have an opportunity to be assessed at a later date

# 2. Reasons for claiming extenuating circumstances

People are affected differently by different circumstances, so it is difficult to provide an exact list of reasons of what might or might not be approved. The key issue is whether the circumstances are as described in the introduction – that is, they had a substantial impact upon your assessment, were exceptional, and beyond your control. There may also be times that, due to unforeseen circumstances affecting the entire University community, other reasons may be approved by the University.

**The lists below are not intended to be definitive**, if in doubt please speak to your Faculty Office, programme administration team, partner institution, or the Doctoral College.

We do expect you to plan your studies to allow for the usual ups-and-downs of life, including minor illnesses or minor personal issues, so claims for extenuating circumstances relating to these will not be approved.

## 2.1. What reasons might be approved?

**Your own health problems**

- Serious mental health issues
- major accident or injury,
- hospitalisation (including for operations)
- serious short term illness that is incapacitating and at its peak at the time of a time-specific assessment, such as an exam, test, performance or presentation
- following NHS advice to self-isolate

**Significant life events**

- Pregnancy-related conditions, childbirth (including a partner or surrogate in labour) or adoption
- Bereavement causing significant impact
- Separation or divorce of yourself or your parents
- Representing the University at national level, or your country at international level, or participation in an event that is of benefit to the University's national or international reputation.

**Unexpected disruption or events**

- Recent burglary, theft or serious car accident

- Jury service that cannot be deferred
- Exceptional changes to employment
- Serious accidents or illness affecting family/friends

**Assessment issues**

- Unavailability of the DLE where the module lead confirms that this would have a significant impact on your preparation for an assessment or exam
- Unavailability of GradBook
- Late diagnosis of a condition, for example, dyslexia, meaning you have not had the appropriate support for assessment, including provision in exams

## 2.2. What reasons might not be approved?

**Your own time management**

- You slept in or your alarm clock did not go off
- Your car broke down, or your train or bus (or equivalent) was delayed or cancelled, unless you can show that you'd made reasonable allowance for such disruption
- Misreading timetables of any kind, or time management problems, such as assessment deadlines close to each other

**Life events**

- Family celebrations, pre-booked holidays, house moves, or similar events, in which you either have input to or control over the date, or may choose not to participate without significant negative effects
- Appointments of any kind, including legal or medical appointments, which could be rearranged
- Minor illness such as colds, coughs, sore throats or hay fever unless the symptoms are particular severe
- Minor accidents or illness affecting relatives or friends, unless you are a sole carer
- Financial problems, including debt sanctions imposed by the University. However, cases of exceptional hardship or significant sudden changes in financial circumstances since enrolment may be considered.
- Sporting, recreational or voluntary commitments, unless you are representing the University at national level or your country at international level, or participating in an event that is of benefit to the University's national or international reputation

**Computer problems**

- Corrupt data or media
- Poor internet connectivity
- Printer failure
- E-Submission of an assessment file in an incorrect format or of the wrong file by accident
- Re-submission of an assessment accidentally after the deadline
- Lack of access to IT facilities due to sanctions imposed by the University

**Other**

- Usual expected pressures of study, such as exam stress and anxiety.
- Problems with postal or other third party delivery of work

## 2.3. How are temporary, acute conditions considered?

If you have a temporary, acute condition, we will try to support you to complete your assessment without extenuating circumstances if possible. You should contact your Faculty Office, programme administration team, the Doctoral College, or equivalent in partner institutions, as soon as possible. They can arrange for temporary study support and put in place arrangements so you can still attend or submit your assessment on time. You should not need to use the extenuating circumstance procedures, unless the support in place does not address the problem sufficiently, or other issues arise.

## 2.4. How do extenuating circumstances apply to long-term health conditions, including disability?

### 2.4.1. Disability

Please contact Disability Inclusion Services, or its equivalent if you are studying with one of our partner institutions, if you have a disability. Disability Inclusion Services will normally be able to identify, provide or arrange reasonable adjustments for your situation, in the form of specific teaching and learning support, detailed in a Student Support Document. This document is shared with Module Leaders, relevant research degree supervisors and related staff, and the Examinations Office to ensure that the appropriate adjustments are made.

Because these adjustments have been made before assessment, you should not need to use the extenuating circumstance provision in relation to your disability. However, exceptional issues may arise, related to your condition, which mean you require consideration beyond the adjustments already made. In this case, the Student Support Document may be used as evidence to support a claim for extenuating circumstances. For extenuating circumstances unrelated to your disability, this Extenuating Circumstances Policy will apply as usual.

### 2.4.2. Long-term health conditions

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 you to seek help with some activities but is not otherwise disabling
- can be managed but can 'flare-up'

You can tell us about your long-term health condition at any point during your studies by contacting Student Services or its equivalent if you are studying at a partner institution.

If you subsequently experience a flare-up of the long term health condition, which is affecting your ability to attend or complete an assessment, you must submit an extenuating circumstances claim for the specific assessment(s). You should tell us in your extenuating circumstances claim how the flare-up is affecting your ability to complete the assessment(s) and we will support you by not asking you to provide evidence, if normally required, for every claim.

Please also consider contacting Student Services, or its equivalent in partner institutions, who may be able to provide further support for your learning. You must inform Student Services, or its equivalent in partner institutions, of any change in your condition, whether improvement or deterioration, so that your long term health status can be reassessed.

Student Services, or its equivalent in partner institutions, may require further evidence from time-to-time and we will contact you at the start of each academic year to review your case, to make sure you have the relevant support you need.

# 3. How to claim for Extenuating Circumstances

It is important to recognise that deadlines enable you to develop the time management and organisational skills necessary for success in the workplace and circumstances will not normally impact you in such a way that they have a significant impact on your overall degree classification. However, there may be times when exceptional situations prevent you from meeting a deadline.

- If the issue relates to a short-term issue affecting you for **up to five working days** and you are unable to provide supporting evidence there is the opportunity to submit **one self-certified extenuating circumstances claim per academic year** without the need for documented evidence. You should clearly explain in your claim form what the issue is and how it is affecting your ability to attend or complete

assessment(s) during this 5 working day period.

- Self-certification would apply only to deadlines occurring during this 5 working day period.

- Subsequent applications for extenuating circumstances must be **supported by valid evidence** as detailed in 3.1 unless you have previously been assessed for a long-term health condition (see section 2.4.2).

- If your claim is approved, coursework deadlines may be extended by a maximum of **five University working days** from the original submission date. If your claim related to time specific assessments such as in-class tests, exams, performances or presentations and was approved, it would be for **non-submission**.

To make a claim for extenuating circumstances you must complete this extenuating circumstances claim form. It is important that you fill in the form accurately and completely – we can take your circumstances into account only if you give us the right information, including the dates that the circumstances occurred and of the assessments affected. For postgraduate research students, this includes research degree milestones.

In very exceptional circumstances a Faculty Registrar, equivalent manager in a partner institution, or the Doctoral College Manager (or their nominee) may submit a claim for extenuating circumstances for you. Normally this will only occur if your circumstances prevent you from engaging with the process yourself.

Please note, if there are methodological reasons why an extension to a research degree milestone (Project Approval and/or Confirmation of Route) may be required, this Extenuating Circumstances Policy should not be used. In such instances, the Director of Studies will submit a request to the Doctoral College for an extension. Please refer to the Research Degrees Handbook for further information.

All claims and evidence will be treated confidentially and the personal information we ask you to provide is to enable us to consider your claim for extenuating circumstances. All personal data collected will be processed in accordance with current data protection legislation and will normally only be used for this purpose. The information you provide will be confidential and will normally only be shared with University staff who are directly involved in the decision-making process.

Please note, there are circumstances where our commitment to confidentiality is overridden by the following:

- When your health and safety, or that of others, is considered to be at risk
- When you are considered to be at serious risk of abuse or exploitation
- When disclosure is required by law
- When your current behaviour or health requirements compromise our responsibilities to outside agencies, including professional placements and partner institutions
- When your current behaviour or health requirements compromise our responsibilities to other students to the extent that those other students are being adversely affected to the serious detriment of their academic progress

Further information can be found in the University's full Student Privacy Notice.

## 3.1. What evidence is likely to be accepted for claims requiring evidence?

If you have self-certified for one claim for extenuating circumstances during an academic year, you must submit evidence with any subsequent claims during that academic year. You should clearly explain in your claim form what the issue is and how it is affecting your ability to attend or complete the assessment(s). The evidence submitted with your claim form should:

- be independent and written by appropriately qualified professionals. Evidence from family and/or friends will not normally be accepted
- confirm the nature and timing of the circumstances, and that the circumstances were witnessed on the relevant date and not reported retrospectively
- be on headed paper, signed and dated by the author. If presented by email it should be sent by the author from the official domain name of the author's organisation
- be in English. It is normally your responsibility to arrange for any translation

- be original, if in hard copy – copies will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances

You should scan your documents and attach them with your claim form to the email you send. It is important that any evidence you submit must be unaltered. It will be deemed unacceptable if it has been amended for any reason. Please be aware, we may need to take steps to verify your evidence and may not notify you beforehand. If the evidence cannot be authenticated to our satisfaction, it may be deemed unacceptable.

Examples of evidence likely to be acceptable include:

- A medical note confirming a mental or physical health condition, provided at the time when you were suffering from that condition. Your note must be from a registered healthcare professional in good standing, such as a GP or consultant, a specialist nurse involved in your care, a psychologist, or any other recognised healthcare professional.
- A letter from a counsellor, such as a member of the University Counselling Service or a qualified counsellor working outside the University, confirming a personal, psychological or emotional problem for which you have been receiving counselling. The University's Counselling Service will provide a letter of support only if it knows of your circumstances, and you were a client of the Service during the relevant period. You will not be able to see a counsellor just to obtain an extenuating circumstances letter.
- A letter from the Residence Life Office confirming a particularly severe accommodation problem
- An official document such as a police report including a police reference number, court summons or other legal document
- A letter from a solicitor, social worker or other official agency
- An insurance claim document supported by a letter from the insurance company.
- If you are making a claim based on exceptional pressures in your employment, a letter from your employer that confirms the circumstances, explains why they are exceptional and outside your control and formally supports your claim. If you are self-employed, you must provide independent evidence to support the claim that the pressures are exceptional and outside your control.
- We also may accept evidence provided by University staff, such as your personal tutor, academic staff closely involved in your pastoral care, a member of the Residence Life team, or staff in Student Services. This may be for reasons which are difficult to obtain independent evidence for, such as a family bereavement.

Please be aware that if you provide evidence which simply verifies a report you made to the person providing the evidence that you were experiencing a situation which impacted you, it will not normally be accepted.

If you feel uncomfortable sharing evidence, always submit an extenuating circumstances claim form explaining what your circumstances are and we may waive the requirement to submit evidence. Please speak to your Faculty Office, programme administration team, partner institution, or the Doctoral College for guidance.

## 3.2. When should a claim for extenuating circumstances be submitted?

You must submit your claim for extenuating circumstances no later than 5 working days after the deadline for submission or date of assessment.

If you don't have access to evidence at the time you submit your extenuating circumstances form, you should still submit your form so your claim can be considered but can submit your evidence up to 15 working days after your form.

If you are still unsure when you should submit your claim for extenuating circumstances by, please contact your Faculty Office, partner institution, or the Doctoral College.

### 3.2.1. Can I submit a claim for extenuating circumstances after the deadline for submitting claims?

- Any late claims will need to be supported with details and evidence as to why you were unable to submit them at the correct time. Valid reasons may include:

- being in hospital or;
- unable to engage with the extenuating circumstances policy due to mental health issues affecting your judgment or;
- a late diagnosis of a condition which may have impacted your performance in an assessment, or your ability to engage with the extenuating circumstances at the correct time

Please note, the examples above are not an exhaustive list and you should contact your Faculty Office, programme administration team, partner institution, or the Doctoral College for further advice.

In situations such as those described above, you should normally submit your claim, and evidence, to your Faculty Office, programme administration team, partner institution, or the Doctoral College as soon as you can.

A final deadline for submitting late claims for extenuating circumstances prior to Subject Assessment Panels and subsequent Award Assessment Boards will be agreed prior to the Subject Assessment Panels. You will be unable to submit claims after this deadline and will instead need to submit an appeal against the Award Assessment Board decision.

If you need to claim for extenuating circumstances after official confirmation of assessment by Doctoral College Quality Sub- Committee for PGR milestones Project Approval (RDC.1) and Confirmation of Route (RDC.2), your claim will need to be supported with details and evidence as to why you did not submit your claim at the correct time.

#### 3.2.2. Can I claim for extenuating circumstances if I become unwell during a time-specific assessment?

A time-specific assessment means an assessment that takes place in a particular time-slot, such as an examination, test, presentation, quiz or performance.

For this type of assessment, we operate a "fit-to-sit" policy. This means that if you attempt these types of assessment, you have declared yourself fit to do so. If you think extenuating circumstances may affect your opportunity to complete these types of assessment to the best of your ability you must:

- not attend the time-specific assessment
- submit a claim for Extenuating Circumstances

If you begin a time-specific assessment, but become unexpectedly unable to continue, you should report your circumstances to the invigilator or other person facilitating the assessment before leaving. You may submit a claim for extenuating circumstances, which, if approved, will be for non-attendance. Please see section 4.1.4 for further information

### 3.3 What happens if a member of a group needs to submit extenuating circumstances?

You may need to prepare assessments as a group and there may be instances where a member of your group whose ability to fulfil their role in the group is affected by their own extenuating circumstances. We expect you to have contingency plans for your group to manage members' absence, but sometimes the impact makes it impossible for the group to attend or complete the group assessment task. In this case the member of the group affected by the circumstance should submit a claim for extenuating circumstances, as described in this policy. Other members of the group may also each submit a claim, citing the absence of their group member due to extenuating circumstances as their reason for submitting their own claim. You should also discuss with the module leader or appropriate member of teaching staff whether the group may be able to carry on in this situation, to avoid unnecessary reassessment.

# 4. What happens when a claim for extenuating circumstances has been submitted?

Once you have submitted your claim for extenuating circumstances it will be considered by your Faculty, partner institution, Academic Partnerships, or the Doctoral College. Normally an Administrator, equivalent in partner institutions, or the Doctoral College Administrator, will consider straightforward claims.

A Senior Programme Administrator, Administration Team Leader, Assistant Faculty Registrar, Faculty Registrar, equivalent manager in partner institutions, Partnerships Operations Manager, Senior Research Administrator or the Doctoral College Manager, may consider more complex and/or sensitive claims.

Each claim is considered individually and all students will be treated fairly and equitably. Decisions on whether to approve the claim will be based on whether:

- the claim was submitted on time and if not, whether evidence to demonstrate a valid reason for considering the claim late has been provided
- the circumstances meet the criteria of
    - Having an impact on your ability to attend or complete assessment(s) at the published/correct/usual time, and
    - Being outside of your control or you could not have reasonably predicted
- Any evidence (if required) is acceptable

Once a decision has been made, you will be notified by email to your University email address. Forms are considered as a matter of priority, however, this may take a few working days, therefore, if you have submitted a claim for an extension to your coursework deadline for a taught module **you should not wait for a decision on your claim before submitting your work**.

## 4.1. What happens when the claim for extenuating circumstances is approved?

Approved extenuating circumstances will not normally change your grade (unless, for example, a claim submitted after the deadline was exceptionally approved and resulted in a penalty for a late submission being removed), but will allow you to complete or attend your assessment(s) at a time when you are not affected by the extenuating circumstances. Approved extenuating circumstances allow you to:

- Submit your assessment up to five working days after than the published deadline, or
- Not submit your assessment at the usual time, but have an opportunity to be assessed later, or
- Not attend a time-specific assessment (for example, an examination, a test, a presentation, quiz or performance, or field trip), but have an opportunity to be assessed later.

### 4.1.1. What should I do if the claim is approved for an extension for coursework?

If your claim was for a coursework assessment on a taught module, you will normally be allowed a maximum extension of **five working days after the published deadline.**

Your extension deadline will be given to you in the email you receive when your claim has been approved, however, **you should not wait for a decision on your claim before submitting your work**. If you have already submitted your work pending the decision on your claim, any late penalty may be waived, or you may submit another version of your work if there is still time remaining during the extension.

If you are a postgraduate research student and your claim related to your Project Approval or Confirmation of Route, you will normally be allowed a maximum extension of

- one month for full-time students or two months for part-time students from the original deadline for Project Approval
- three months for both full-time and part-time students from the original deadline for Confirmation of Route

Please note, extensions to research degree milestones are only permitted if you have attempts remaining.

#### 4.1.2. What happens if I still cannot submit my work by the extended deadline?

If the extended deadline is in term-time and you have been unable to meet the extended deadline as you are still affected by extenuating circumstances, you must inform your Faculty Office, programme administration team, partner institution, or the Doctoral College. You may be required to submit a further extenuating circumstances claim form with evidence. If the claim is approved it will be for non-submission and you will normally be allowed to be re-assessed at the same attempt, please see section 4.1.4 for further information.

#### 4.1.3. When should I submit my coursework for a taught module if the extension falls in a vacation period?

If your extension falls in your vacation period, you should endeavour to submit your coursework by the new deadline, however, if you are unable to meet that deadline, your claim for extenuating circumstances will automatically be approved for non-submission and you will not need to submit another claim form. This is because we do not normally expect you to complete academic work during your vacation periods. As your claim will be automatically approved for non-submission, you will normally be allowed to be re-assessed at the same attempt, please see section 4.1.4 for further information.

If you are unsure when your vacation period is, please check with your Faculty Office/partner institution/the Doctoral College.

#### 4.1.4. What should I do if the claim is approved for non-submission or non-attendance of an assessment?

In cases such as these a zero mark for the assessment will be recorded and the Award Assessment Board will decide what action to take. Normally the Board will allow you to be re-assessed at the same attempt as the submission that your extenuating circumstances were approved. The re-assessment will take place either

- during your programme's referral period (during the summer for most programmes but do check with your Faculty if you are unsure), or
- as a repeat of the module during the next academic year if the volume of credit you have not achieved is more than what is allowed for referrals.

The mark of zero will be replaced with the mark you achieve for the reassessment. Please refer to our Academic Regulations for more information on referral and repeat. Please note this applies to taught modules only and does not apply to research degree milestones.

### 4.2. What happens when a claim for extenuating circumstances is not approved?

If your claim for extenuating circumstances is not approved, we will send an email to your University email address giving reasons why. If you had submitted work after the original published deadline pending the outcome of your claim, you will receive a mark of zero, and reassessment will be at the next attempt (subject to attempts remaining).

If you submitted by the published deadline, the mark you receive will be the actual mark awarded.

If your claim for extenuating circumstances relating to a PGR milestone is not approved, you may:

- Be permitted a second attempt at the assessment if your claim for extenuating circumstances related to your first attempt at the assessment, or;
- Be withdrawn from your research degree if your claim for extenuating circumstances related to your second attempt at the assessment.

## 5. What happens if I submit several claims for extenuating circumstances?

We want to ensure you have the best opportunity to demonstrate your academic abilities, which is why we have the extenuating circumstances policy in place. If we notice a pattern to your claims, or you submit three claims

within a six-month period, this may indicate there is an underlying issue we may be able to help or support you with. We may, therefore, refer you to either the Support for Study policy or, if your programme has a Fitness to Practise requirement, to the Fitness to Practise procedure. This is so we can discuss your claims with you and put in place additional support you may need or signpost you to other services that can help you.

## 6. How does the extenuating circumstances policy and procedure link to other University policies/procedures?

We have a range of other services, policies and procedures that may be relevant to you. They can be accessed at:

Support for Study policy
Fitness to Practise
Pregnancy, adoption and becoming a parent whilst studying
Interrupting study – known as a Break in Learning for apprentices
Appeals
Academic Offences

## 7. Is there a process for appealing an extenuating circumstances decision?

You may appeal an Extenuating Circumstances decision made by the Faculty, partner institution, or the Doctoral College on the following grounds:

- The Extenuating Circumstances procedure was not followed correctly
- The decision reached, or the outcome, was unreasonable
- New material evidence is available which you were unable, for good reason, to provide earlier in the process
- There is a reasonable perception of bias during the process

Appeals should normally be made within ten working days of the date of the email communicating the extenuating circumstances decision to you.

To submit an appeal you must complete the appeal form and submit it, with any supporting evidence, to the Complaints and Appeals Team at appeals@plymouth.ac.uk within the timeframes outlined above. Further information on the appeals procedure can be accessed at the appeals procedure webpage.