

FOUNDATION YEAR: EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES AND SPECIAL CONDITIONS

Extenuating circumstances are circumstances which are exceptional; are outside the student's control; can be corroborated by independent evidence; occurred during or immediately before the assessment in question; and may have led to an unrepresentative performance in relation to the student's previously demonstrated ability. Extenuating circumstances can only be used to gain further time for assessments; they cannot be used to gain additional marks.

The Head of Foundation, Programme Manager, Course Leaders or Personal Tutor will have identified students who may fall into the category of extenuating circumstances through pastoral meetings, student records and information discussed in personal tutorials. Students with previous or longstanding circumstances which may have affected their ability to complete work on time during each stage of the course do not automatically fall into the category of special consideration, these students instead should have had reasonable adjustments made to support their learning in completing work on time.

Students who the course team have identified as being eligible for special consideration will be approached individually to discuss consideration of extenuating circumstances. Students are also made aware through the assessment handbook that they can apply for extenuating circumstances and that such applications should be made in writing 7 days prior to the assessment.

Special consideration for extenuating circumstances is to be given if a student has temporarily experienced:

- (a) an illness or injury, or*
- (b) some other event outside of their control, which has, or is reasonably likely to have had, a material effect on their ability to take an assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment in an assessment.*

In addition to application for extenuating circumstances the assessment board (comprised of the Course Leaders and Head of Foundation) may consider certain extenuating circumstances during the assessment process in mitigation of:

- a) failure to submit work by the assessment submission deadline;*
- b) failure to attend for assessments or examinations.*

Examples of circumstances in which students may be eligible for special consideration include:

- Category (a) – an injury or illness such as a broken arm or glandular fever*
- Category (b) – bereavement or other form of emotional trauma.*

Extenuating circumstances for the purposes of clarification in relation to the Foundation Year Assessments are circumstances which:

- a) are exceptional;*
- b) are outside the student's control;*

- c) *should be corroborated by independent evidence;*
- d) *are likely to have had a negative impact on the student's ability to undertake or complete assessments.*
- e) *are short term, lasting no more than 4 weeks.*

Examples include:

- a) *illness at the time of the date for the submission of work or the assessment;* b) *bereavement;*
- c) *an acute episode of a chronic condition which has an impact on the student not mitigated by any reasonable adjustments (such as flexible deadlines) already in place;*
- d) *unusually severe mental or emotional stress at or immediately before the date for submission of work or the time of the assessment.*

Examples of the kind of circumstances which will not be deemed valid are:

- a) *A short term problem such as a cold which has occurred during the course of a term, since students are expected to plan their work schedule sufficiently well so that minor illnesses or problems do not affect their ability to meet submission deadlines;*
- b) *Mild unspecified depression or a level of anxiety and stress which normally occurs at assessment time;*
- c) *Technical problems, such as a corrupted disk, lack of a printer, loss of work on a computer with no back up. Students are advised to keep copies, photographs and a record of work submitted for assessment;*
- d) *Students may not make a claim of extenuating circumstances relating to pressure of work, since they have, by implication, made a commitment to make available the time necessary for study;*
- e) *A long term health condition or disability for which reasonable adjustments have already been made;*
- f) *Complaints against staff or in relation to course delivery, which are managed through the Foundation Year complaints procedure (as outlined in the student handbook);*
- g) *Personal disruptions or events which could have been anticipated; such as holidays, weddings, changing address or employment, religious holidays or festivals which are usually known in advance.*
- h) *Where personal arrangements impact on assessment or attainment*
- i) *Where preparation for the assessment is affected by environmental factors within the centre and beyond such as weather, building work or staff shortages.*

These examples are not definitive and are intended only as a guide. In all cases the Head of Foundation has authority to use discretion, taking into account the full circumstances of a particular case.

Special consideration because of extenuating circumstances is given to students to allow an extension of the original agreed time for completion of assessment. If the circumstances are agreed to be extenuating at the point of assessment, the student will be given an extension to the deadline of work assessed accordingly. Upon completion of required coursework, in consideration of the circumstances, the full grade will be awarded to the student without penalty.

Students must provide evidence to support special consideration due to extenuating circumstances. That evidence must be specific about the nature, timing and severity of the problem and if possible provide an independent assessment of the effect the problem may have had on the student's performance.

Corroborating evidence may include,

- *A signed medical certificate confirming a medical or psychological condition (provided at the time when the student was suffering from that condition).*
- *A letter from a qualified counsellor confirming a personal, psychological or emotional problem for which the student has been receiving counseling.*

- *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.*

Students should not seek to obtain corroborating evidence retrospectively. Any certificate or other medical note where the date of the certificate is after the date(s) of the illness or outside of the four-week period prior to assessment may not be accepted.

Requests for extenuating circumstances will be agreed or declined by the Head of Foundation in discussion with the Course Leaders. Following agreement of extenuating circumstances for an extension to assessment submission deadlines the Head of Foundation will layout the details of the agreement and re-submission date of assessment for the student. Re-submission dates should be an extension of between 5-10 days for students to complete work as agreed by the lead assessors (Course Leaders).

The course team will be informed by the Head of Foundation that students have been granted an extension to assessment submission due to special conditions and extenuating circumstances. A new assessment submission deadline will be set by the Head of Foundation in agreement with the Course Leaders. This will be the standard Foundation Year extension and re-submission deadline. Students can be assured that all claims of extenuating circumstances are treated as confidential (between the Head of Foundation, Course Leaders, Programme Manager, and students Personal Tutor). Any information submitted will be used only to determine the validity of the claim. All approvals of applications for consideration of extenuating circumstances remain the decision of the Head of Foundation.

Students who have not submitted a claim of extenuating circumstances under these regulations will not be able to use extenuating circumstances as the basis for a later appeal against the decision of an assessment board.