



**UNIVERSITY COLLEGE BIRMINGHAM
CODE OF PRACTICE ON EXTENUATING
CIRCUMSTANCES**

Approved by Academic Regulations Committee

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Index

1. Introduction
2. Specific Guidance Related to Covid-19
3. Grounds for Extenuating Circumstances
4. Evidence
5. Deadlines for notification of Extenuating Circumstances
6. Procedure
7. Extenuating Circumstances – Possible Outcomes
8. Deferral of Studies
9. Organisation of the Extenuating Circumstances Panel (ECP)
10. Appeals
11. False Claims

1. Introduction

1.1 During a period of study, students may encounter significant personal difficulties that adversely affect their ability to study or to complete assessments and examinations. These personal difficulties are referred to as 'Extenuating Circumstances'.

In general terms, extenuating circumstances must be:

1. Significant (they have more than a minor impact on you)
2. Unexpected (you must have had no prior knowledge of the event)
3. Unpreventable (there were no reasonable steps you could have taken of the event)
4. Relevant (you must be able to link the event, and its impact on the period for which your claim is made)
5. Corroborated (it must be independently verifiable, and the evidence must meet the University requirements – see point 4 for evidence guidance)

1.2 Extenuating Circumstances can normally be considered for enrolled HE students (Undergraduates and Postgraduates students)

1.3 Extenuating Circumstances may occur at any point in the academic year and may affect any form of assessment including coursework and examinations and may result in absence from teaching.

1.4 Extenuating Circumstances applications can be considered only for final assessments and examinations. They do not apply for draft submissions, ethical clearance forms, mock exams, missed classes and poor attendance.

1.5 It is the responsibility of the student to report Extenuating Circumstances at the earliest possible opportunity, within the appropriate timeframe (see 1.4 for further explanation) but no later than 10 working days after the original due date.

1.6 Extenuating Circumstances claims should be submitted as close as possible to date of the affected assessment (around 2 -3 weeks before the due date or closer). Applications should not be submitted so far in advance that the impact of the extenuating circumstances cannot be assessed.

1.7 A successful extenuating circumstances application does not excuse you from an assessment, as learning outcomes for the module(s) affected must be still undertaken. It may lead to the removal of late penalties for assessed work or a further opportunity to attempt an assessment.

2. Specific Guidance Related to Covid-19

2.1 Where a student experiences any symptoms of Coronavirus (high temperature,

new continuous cough, loss or change in sense of taste or smell), they must check current NHS guidance and contact: covid19@ucb.ac.uk

2.2 Students should submit an application for extenuating circumstances if they feel they are experiencing significant or serious illness as a result of Covid-19, or caring for a member of their immediate household, where significant caring support is required which impacts on their study.

2.3 Students asked to self-isolate following NHS guidelines (unless exempt) may find they are not able to attend UCB campus during periods in which they are due to undertake practical assessments. In these circumstances, students should submit an application for extenuating circumstances.

2.4 Students who do submit applications for extenuating circumstances due to a positive Covid-19 test should continue, wherever possible, to include with their application supporting evidence of positive lateral flow tests and confirmation that these results have been uploaded to the gov.uk website.

3. Grounds for Extenuating Circumstances

3.1 Extenuating Circumstances are circumstances that are exceptional, unforeseen and that significantly disrupt a student's academic performance. They may include (but are not limited to):

- Significant or serious instances of physical or mental illness, accident, or injury at the time of the assessment or during preparation for it. You must demonstrate that you have consulted a medical practitioner in a timely manner regarding your issue(s);
- Undergoing a period of self-isolation following NHS guidelines which impacts the ability to undertake practical sessions contributing to final module assessment.
- A significant deterioration of a permanent or chronic condition, which the student has already reported and is already covered by reasonable adjustment OR/IF reasonable adjustments do not address the impact of the condition and still leave the student at a disadvantage. Worsening of a long-term existing condition, formally diagnosed by a medical practitioner.
- The recent death or serious illness of a close family member, a close friend or dependant where significant caring support is required. Across the sector this is typically considered as six weeks prior to the date of application; however, we will consider all applications on a case-by-case basis. After that time, formal evidence of the impact of the bereavement will have to be provided.
- Family crisis or emergency directly affecting the student at the time of the assessment;
- Unforeseen significant caring responsibilities
- Absence covered by Paternity and Maternity Leave, Shared Parental Leave, and Jury Service (deferral of which has been denied by the Court).

- Exceptional and unforeseen financial hardship or significant change in personal circumstances (e.g. divorce of student, fire, court appearance by student, acute accommodation crisis).
- Being the victim of bullying, harassment or threatening behaviour
- Significant change in employment circumstances beyond the control of the student (Part-time students only)
- Victim of crime or involvement in a criminal case (e.g. as a witness)

3.2 Circumstances that will not usually be considered as Extenuating Circumstances include:

- Coughs, cold and minor illnesses, even if supported by medical evidence (please refer to the section for specific advice concerning Covid-19 above);
- Minor illnesses of relatives (unless their main or shared carer)
- Temporary self-inflicted conditions, e.g. hangover, bad health.
- Routine medical appointments;
- Undergoing a period of self-isolation following NHS guidelines, unless impacting the ability to undertake practical sessions contributing to final module assessment or for reasons listed above, including:
 - a. significant or serious illness.
 - b. significant or serious illness of a member of the immediate household or dependant where significant caring support is required.
- Computer or other IT problems such as not following submission instructions, leading to incorrect, incomplete or non-submissions, IT equipment damage/loss.
- Time management or personal organisation, failing to allow enough time to prepare for submission or complete the assessment
- Typical short-term assessment/examination stress and low mood which is expected and normal, unless a flare-up of a pre-diagnosed illness/condition
- Pressure of academic workload
- Long-term health condition, either physical or psychological, where treatment or additional support/arrangements or reasonable adjustments are in place to mitigate.
- Misreading or misinterpreting the assessment/exam, assessments due dates, remit/timetable or locating the correct details
- Assessments or examinations with similar deadlines and due at the same time;
- Repeated applications based on the same circumstances, where sufficient mitigation had already been made for the same circumstances
- Planned non-academic, personal or domestic events and activities such as moving house, weddings.
- Holidays or travel arrangements.
- Employment and consequences of employment or other types external work (unless due to unforeseen financial hardship).
- Sports activities and events.

- Late applications or late disclosure of the circumstances

3.3 University College Birmingham has put in place arrangements to make reasonable adjustments for students with additional needs. As a result, if a student has a disability they may apply for Extenuating Circumstances based on factors not connected with the disability, or based on unforeseen effects of the disability or if adjustments were made after your assessment.

3.4 Students with a granted reasonable adjustment support plan, do not need to apply for Extenuating Circumstances if the support plan refers to concessions for 10 day adjusted hand-in date on coursework and reports; practical and presentation type assessments (for more information about Reasonable Adjustments and Alternative Assessment please see the [current Policy](#))

3.5 The submission of a claim for Extenuating Circumstances included in the list shown in 3.1 (above) does not imply that the claim will be accepted as other factors will be taken into account including the time of the relevant assessment and the likely impact of the event on the assessment.

3.6 Students are expected to plan their workload and allow sufficient time to cope with the demands of both employment and study workloads.

3.7 UCB have in place various learning support options:

a) Centre for Academic Skills and English (CASE) offers tailored support to all students at UCB:

- Academic Skills Centre (ASC), based within CASE, providing academic support through one-to-one or group sessions.
- Support Plans – students can be ‘screened’ at first stage to identify needs, to open opportunities to offer specific in-house tuition/support.
- Online support – digital resources to help students develop their academic skills online.
- Disability Support – offering support and advice for students with additional needs or disabilities.

(More information about [CASE](#))

b) Our Student Engagement team at University College Birmingham is here to support all students during their university life, ensuring students have a single point of contact to discuss any issues they may be having while studying at UCB (more information about [Student Engagement team](#)).

c) We also have a free and confidential Health & Wellbeing Service which is open to everyone. The service strives to promote and encourage healthy lifestyles and positive mental health, and the team is on-hand to help students manage any difficulties or concerns they may have (more information about [Health and Wellbeing service](#)).

d) Safeguarding and Harassment Advisors, providing a safe and secure

environment across all UCB campuses. We have a range of staff trained as Safeguarding and Harassment advisors, should you need any support, advice or guidance on matters relating to Safeguarding or Harassment. (More information about [Safeguarding](#))

4. Evidence

4.1 UCB recognises that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, third party evidence may not be available. Where possible, submissions for Extenuating Circumstances must be accompanied by independent third-party evidence which must confirm the existence of the Extenuating Circumstances and state how this has affected the student concerned at the time of the assessment.

4.2 Examples of acceptable third-party evidence include (see Evidence Guidance in Appendix 1):

- GP/Consultant/Hospital letter on headed paper;
- Letter from a Solicitor;
- Letter from a Counsellor or other authority;
- Copy of the funeral booklet/order of service or Death Certificate;
- Bank Statement or letter from the Student Loans Company, Court letters etc.;
- Police Case Reference number and report. The crime reference number on its own will not be sufficient to support a claim and a medical letter or police report explaining the effect would be more appropriate.

4.3 If the evidence is in another language the student must provide both a copy of the original document and a certified translation into English. UCB may seek to verify the accuracy of the translation provided and reserve the right not to accept any evidence that is unable to be translated.

4.4 Evidence provided does not have to be an original document. We accept photocopied/scanned documents, but we may request to see an original document for authentication purposes. All photographs/screenshots have to be a good quality, not faded or cropped and all information should be clearly displayed. Photographs of injuries/illnesses or videos of the events are not appropriate and will not be considered.

4.5 If you are waiting for the evidence and are worried it will not arrive in time before the extenuating circumstances deadline, you should still apply for extenuating circumstances, but highlight that you are still waiting evidence and report when it's likely to arrive.

4.6 UCB reserves the right to check the legitimacy of any evidence provided. If any submission is found to be fabricated or altered, then the student may be investigated.

4.7 Medical evidence must contain information including:

- a) Confirmation that the ongoing treatment/medication is affecting the student.

- b) Dates of any consultations with a GP/Consultant and outcomes of the meetings.
- c) Dates of the affected period of time (this must cover the date of the assessment).
- d) Information on how the illness or medication has affected the student's performance, ability to attend University, concentration or completion of assessments.

4.8 The dates of the evidence must be relevant with the date of the affected assessment.

4.9 A letter from a GP stating that the student was seen and the student told him/her that they had been ill will not normally be accepted as evidence.

4.10 Self-certification of your own circumstances may be considered in circumstances where evidence is not available or accessible.

4.11 The Chair of the Extenuating Circumstances Panel (ECP) Chair or nominee will use the criteria listed above to decide whether the evidence submitted is acceptable. The student is responsible for providing sufficient evidence; Registry will not make enquiries or obtain evidence on a student's behalf.

You may be reluctant or uncomfortable disclosing relevant information pertaining to private or sensitive issues or mental or physical health difficulties which are affecting your academic performance, but this cannot be used as excuse not to do so. We cannot consider circumstances that are not disclosed (see section 3.7 for more information on available support).

4.12 If you do not want Registry to share the evidence or confidential details of your application with your personal tutor or their nominee, please let us know at the time of your application.

4.13 All applications for extenuating circumstances are treated confidentially and only concerned staff will review applications and evidence provided.

4.14 To ensure fairness to all students, it is the student's responsibility to fully disclose all relevant extenuating circumstances within the timeframes given. Once the Exam Board's result is published on your Student Dashboard, students will not be able to submit extenuating circumstances and retrospective applications.

4.15 It is the student's responsibility to check if the information on their application is correct and the desired modules and assessments have been selected. Once the decision is made and EC claim is closed, no amendments can be made to the application.

5. Deadlines for notification of Extenuating Circumstances

5.1 The Extenuating Circumstances procedure must be clearly publicised in

handbooks, induction materials and Canvas. All students are responsible for making themselves aware of the criteria and complying with deadlines.

- 5.2** It is the student's responsibility to provide Registry with the appropriate application and accompanying evidence within the specified deadline (please refer to point 5.5)
- 5.3** Senior Lecturers, Personal Tutors or their nominees cannot make submissions on a student's behalf, apart from in exceptional circumstances.
- 5.4** Extenuating Circumstances will usually only be considered by Registry if submitted within 10 working days after the assignment deadline or examination. The exception to this is where it is impossible for the student to submit their application due to medical reasons, locality reasons and other factors that will be determined by Registry.
- 5.5** Evidence for an Extenuating Circumstances claim should be submitted within 10 working days after submission of the application. The exception to this is where it is impossible for the Student to submit their evidence due to medical reasons, locality reasons and other factors that will be determined by Registry.
- 5.6** A working day is deemed to be Monday-Friday, excluding Public Holidays and days on which UCB is closed.
- 5.7** Extenuating Circumstances applications cannot be submitted once the Board of Examiners has met and the results of the Exam Boards are published.

6. Procedure

- 6.1** Decisions on whether a claim for Extenuating Circumstances is valid will be based on the following factors:
- The severity of the problem and length of time affected.
 - Supporting documentary evidence.
 - Relevance on how close the affected period is to the point of assessment.
- 6.2** The Extenuating Circumstances application is expected to be completed online on the UCB Portal or U@UCB app accessed via the Academic Registry tab and appropriate supporting evidence needs to be uploaded online or emailed to Registry directly extenuating@ucb.ac.uk.
- 6.3** Upon receipt of the relevant Extenuating Circumstances application and appropriate evidence, Registry will then process the application. The application will usually not be considered without appropriate evidence and correctly completed application. The eligibility of the application will be assessed by Registry. The appropriate personal tutor or their nominee will be consulted with regard to the extenuating circumstances and if the evidence and reasons for ECs meet the criteria (see point 3) and are supported by the personal tutor or their

nominee then the application may be accepted by Registry. Once a decision has been made, the status of the application will be updated on the UCB Portal and it is then student's responsibility to check the progress of their application.

6.4 If you do not wish Registry to share the information provided on your application with your personal tutor or their nominee, please inform Registry as soon as possible. (See our GDPR resources section on the [website](#).)

6.5 If the evidence is deemed to be insufficient or the reasons for Extenuating Circumstances do not meet the criteria stated or the Personal Tutor or their nominee does not support the application, then the application will be referred to the Extenuating Circumstances Panel (ECP) (see section 9) at the end of semester Extenuating Circumstances Board. Once a decision has been made, the status of the application will be updated on the UCB Portal, the student will receive automated email notifying them that a decision has been made and it is the student's responsibility to check the progress of their application.

6.6 The result of the claim of Extenuating Circumstances will then be considered at the Board of Examiners meeting. Details of the Extenuating Circumstances claim are treated confidentially and the nature of the claim is not discussed at the Board of Examiners meeting.

6.7 Apprenticeships

When applying for Extenuating Circumstances for Apprenticeships, if the assessment is a UCB module then the UCB Extenuating Circumstances procedure must be followed. If the assessment is part of the Apprenticeship Framework then the student must follow the Apprenticeship Framework guidelines.

7. Extenuating Circumstances – Possible Outcomes

7.1 If accepted:

- The student is permitted to submit the assignment late, within 10 working days after the original due date. If the student cannot meet that deadline, then the Board of Examiners may offer another opportunity to submit assignment as a first attempt at the next available opportunity.
- The late assignment is marked without late penalty if handed in before the final hand-in date. The final hand-in date for all work is exactly 10 working days after the original assignment deadline.
- Applications for modules with 40 credits or 60 credits such as Dissertations/Research Projects will be treated differently and a new submission date may be agreed. The new submission date will typically be between 10 working days and up to a maximum of 6 weeks after the original due date and will be decided based on a student's individual circumstances. A longer extension may be provided in extreme circumstances such as hospitalisation or a serious medical issue. This new hand-in date will be provided to the student by Registry. The student will be required to complete a schedule of completion for the Project, providing an estimated completion date. Once the new deadline is provided by Registry, the student is required to submit their Research Project by the given deadline and late submissions

are not accepted. If the Research Project is not submitted by given due date, the student needs to re-apply for further Extenuating Circumstances, otherwise it will be classed as non-submission.

- The student sits the examination as a first attempt at the next available opportunity.
- An additional resit may be granted if the Extenuating Circumstances apply to the reassessment period.

7.2 Depending on the type of assessment that the Extenuating Circumstances apply to and the student's academic profile, there may be several different outcomes agreed by the Board of Examiners for applications that are **not accepted, which includes:**

- The student re-sits the examination at the next available opportunity.
- The student re-sits the assignment at the next available opportunity.
- The late assignment is marked, and the late penalty is applied by the Board of Examiners;
- If the Extenuating Circumstances application was for a resubmission this may result in a failed module.

Please note that a resit opportunity may be offered if student achieves at least 60 credits or more for the academic year, where less than 60 credits have been achieved, the student may be required to Repeat with attendance all failed modules.

7.3 The Extenuating Circumstances Panel cannot change individual assessment or module marks. For reference see [Academic Regulations: Part 2: Assessment, Progression and Award](#).

8. Deferral of Studies

8.1 An application to defer studies can be made if a student's ability to attend and participate in the programme of study on which they are enrolled is or will be adversely affected by Extenuating Circumstances over an extended period of time. For further information see the [Code of Practice on Leave of Absence Procedures](#).

9. Terms of Reference of the Extenuating Circumstances Panel (ECP)

9.1 The Extenuating Circumstances Panel consists of:

- University Registrar and Secretary;
- Registry Administrator;
- Relevant Senior Lecturer/Personal Tutor or their nominee.

9.2 The Panel should be scheduled to convene after the deadline for submission of Extenuating Circumstances forms has passed at the end of the Semester, but before the Board of Examiners has met.

9.3 All cases will be discussed with utmost confidentiality and members of the ECP must not discuss cases outside the meeting.

9.4 The ECP will report recommendations relating to progress and award decisions to the relevant Board of Examiners. For reference see [Academic Regulations: Part 2: Assessment, Progression and Award](#)

10 A student is entitled to know the outcome of their submission; however, details on the discussions held at the Panel meeting will not be disclosed.

11 Appeals

11.1 A student cannot appeal against the decision of the ECP. If further evidence becomes available, which was not available at the time of the original application, the student can present this for consideration through the Assessment Appeals Procedure. Information regarding the procedure for making an appeal may be found on the [UCB website](#).

12 False Claims

12.1 Submitting a false claim could be regarded as an attempt to gain an unfair advantage and could constitute a breach of discipline under the University's disciplinary procedure.

APPENDIX 1 Extenuating Circumstances Evidence Guidance

Both the relevant application and corroborating evidence need to be provided to Registry, either by uploading online or emailing directly to extenuating@ucb.ac.uk at the same time or not later than 10 working days after the application submission (working day is deemed to be Monday-Friday excluding weekends and Bank Holidays and days on which UCB is closed).

There may be instances where evidence is not yet available; the student should inform Registry when they expect to receive it.

Examples of potentially valid Extenuating Circumstances and evidence:

Criteria	Examples of appropriate evidence
<p>Significant or serious illness, accident or injury</p> <p>The illness/injury, either physical or mental, prevents the student from completing an assessment at the specified time, or will have a significant negative effect on the student's performance on the date an assessment is taking place.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Flare up/new diagnosis or significant deterioration of a long-term condition, either physical, or mental which affects the student to a greater extent than usual. It prevents the student from completing an assessment at the specified time or will have a significant negative effect on the student's performance on the date an assessment is taking place or due for submission.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Late diagnosis of a long-term medical condition which has prevented the student from completing an assessment at the specified time or had a significant negative effect on the student's performance.</p>	<p>Letter from a GP/Consultant/Hospital/Counsellor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On Letterhead • In English • Stamped and Dated • Signed <p>Stating the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief information about the student's health • Dates of any consultations and outcomes of the meetings • Dates of the affected period of time • Details of any effects medication or treatment had on the student • Information on how the illness has affected the student's performance and ability to complete assessments <p>Registry may not accept a 'fit note' as sole evidence.</p> <p>Registry will not accept letters from a GP that states the student 'told him/her that they had been ill'.</p> <p>Appointment letters may be relevant i.e. if an appointment clashes with an examination.</p>
<p>Recent death or serious illness of a close family member or dependant</p> <p>The recent death of a close family member or partner, close to the date the assessment is due. This</p>	<p>Copy of the Death Certificate</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Copy of the Funeral Booklet</p> <p>OR</p>

prevents the student from completing an assessment at the specified time or will have a significant negative effect on the student's performance on the date an assessment is taking place or due for submission.	In the case of a serious injury any medical evidence as stated above.
<p>Family crisis or emergency direct affecting the student</p> <p>Significant caring responsibilities or significant problems in the student's personal and domestic life that prevents the student from completing an assessment at the specified time or will have a significant negative effect on the student's performance on the date an assessment is taking place or due for submission.</p>	<p>Letter from a relevant authority e.g. School, Council, Solicitor, medical professional employer, explaining the relevant situation.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>If related to a crime, then a police report and crime number.</p>
<p>Absence covered by Court Attendance</p> <p>Attendance at Court as a witness, defendant, plaintiff, or jury member on the date an assessment is due or leading up to assessment deadline.</p>	Official correspondence from the Court or Tribunal Authority showing that the request for deferral has been rejected.
<p>Absence covered by Paternity Leave</p> <p>Paternity Leave that prevents the student from completing an assessment at the specified time or will have a significant negative effect on the student's performance on the date the assessment is taking place or due for submission.</p>	<p>Official correspondence from the student's employer.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Copy of Birth Certificate</p>
<p>Exceptional and unforeseen financial hardship</p> <p>Significant financial problems in the student's personal life that prevents the student from completing an assessment at the specified time or will have a significant negative effect on the student's performance on the date an assessment is taking place.</p>	<p>Letter from Student Loans Company, Bailiffs, Local Authority, Landlord, Court orders etc.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Bank Statement</p>
<p>Other</p> <p>Any exceptional, unforeseen circumstances that do not meet any of the criteria above.</p>	Appropriate evidence from relevant authority

The UCB Health and Wellbeing team will only be able to provide evidence for Extenuating Circumstances if the student meets the following criteria:

- The student was receiving therapeutic intervention from the team during the period they are claiming mitigation for
- Experience significant impairment to their mental health
- The student had a minimum of three sessions during that period
- The student had no other engagement with external providers during that period

All requests must be emailed to counselling@ucb.ac.uk