Extenuating Circumstances - Guidance for Students

These guidelines on extenuating circumstances apply to all students enrolled on University programmes, whether these run in the UK or overseas. These guidelines are used by the University in assessing the validity of claims, but do not take precedence over the University’s Academic Regulations. For example, the granting of extenuating circumstances on a module does not extend a student’s maximum period of registration. These guidelines should be read alongside the relevant section of the regulations governing your course of study, as well as with your course guide. (www.wlv.ac.uk/polsregs)

What are extenuating circumstances?

The University wants all students to do their best. You are expected to take responsibility for your own learning and the University recognises that students perform to the best of their capabilities if they regularly attend classes and participate in all activities associated with their modules.

The University also knows that very occasionally something beyond your control may happen suddenly to prevent you from either attending an examination (or other test) or completing an assessment. This event must be one you could not have foreseen and cannot be made manageable by short term arrangements e.g. an extension. On such an occasion you should submit a claim for extenuating circumstances, and if your claim is approved you will be permitted to take the affected assessment at the next opportunity (which may be in the following academic year), and the work will be graded as if it were a first attempt. This is unless it is a resit or a retake when the grade will be capped.

Examples of circumstances that would normally be accepted are:

- The death of a close member of the family - a parent or grandparent, guardian, sibling, son or daughter (claims relating to members of your extended family will not be accepted).
- Serious ill health, if the reason for your claim is due to stress, low mood or depression, an email may be sent to the Student Enabling Centre who will contact you to discuss possible support options that may be available for you.
- Personal accident or injury.
- Major and unplanned changes to employment only relevant where a student’s course or mode of study permits employment).
- Jury service (if attendance is compulsory and cannot be deferred).
- Low mood, depression, stress

Please note that your claim will only be granted where you can demonstrate that the event significantly affected your ability to complete the assessment for which you are claiming.
What are NOT valid reasons for submitting a claim for extenuating circumstances?

As a student of the University you are expected to manage minor illnesses and normal life events that may be distressing but occur as part of normal life. You are expected to continue studying and participating in scheduled learning activities, including field work, in-class tests, presentations and practicals while you cope with these problems. All employers will expect this of you, as would other Universities or places of learning. If you do have to be absent for a short period during teaching you will be expected to make up for missed study through additional work.

Examples of the types of life events you are expected to cope with and reasons that do not qualify for extenuating circumstances are:

- Retrospective (late) claims, claims received after the examination or assignment due date
- Short term illness for coursework submissions - this should be covered by an application for an extension.
- General examination related stress or anxiety during revision and assessment periods.
- Domestic or personal disruptions, such as moving house, a change of job, weddings, religious festivals, failed travel arrangements, or financial difficulties.
- Any holidays. The University publishes its academic calendar, including details of assessment weeks in advance. Students should consult this and other relevant documents when booking holidays or annual leave. This is particularly relevant to resit assessments that take place in July.
- Study related problems, such as equipment failure, failure to back up copies of stolen or corrupted work.
- Disabilities and medical conditions that were known to you when you accepted a place to study at University and for which special arrangements or adaptations have already been made. The University may exceptionally consider a sudden and unexpected worsening of a pre-existing condition, including fluctuating or intermittent medical conditions i.e. Multiple Sclerosis (MS); Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME); Rheumatoid Arthritis; Parkinson’s Disease; Crohn’s Disease; Diabetes; Sickle Cell Anaemia; mental illness; or acute stress. Such conditions will only be considered if you are registered with the Student Enabling Centre and have provided medical evidence to confirm your condition prior to any claim for mitigation. For further advice and assistance please consult specialist staff who work in the Student Enabling Centre.
- The absence of a member of your team for group work, subject to the nature of the assignment. Please consult your module leader if a group member is absent for an extended period.
- The death of a member of your extended family, e.g. an uncle or aunt.
- Employment-related issues (except for students in full time employment studying on a part-time course).
- Pregnancy, claims for which will not normally be accepted. You should determine whether you believe that you will be fit to study and undertake assessment around your expected due date. If you wish to defer study you should apply for a Leave of Absence for the semester during which you are due to give birth. However, claims for any unexpected difficulties around the birth date would be considered but must be supported by medical evidence.
When should I make a claim?

You should treat a claim for extenuating circumstances in the same manner as you would when notifying an employer of absence. You must submit your claim as soon as is practicable when you experience difficulties, so do not delay. Retrospective (late) claims will not be accepted. Your claim must be entered before or on the day of your examination or due date for your assignment.

If you do not declare extenuating circumstances as soon as you become aware of them they cannot be taken into account later on unless there are exceptionally compelling reasons for them not having been declared at the appropriate time.

Please note that the submission of any falsified or fraudulent documentation in support of an extenuating circumstances claim will be referred to the Conduct and Appeals Unit and may result in Disciplinary action.

If you have exceptionally compelling reasons for not having claimed at the appropriate time, log a helpdesk call in e:Vision to your Student Office outlining the details and the reasons you did not make a claim. This will be considered by the Student Office Manager.

How do I make a claim?

Log into e:Vision. Go to your ‘Programme and Modules’ page and click on the ‘My Assessments and Extenuating Circumstances’ link.

Click into the relevant assessment that you wish to apply for extenuating circumstances for. If you are applying for more than one assessment you will need to apply separately for each assessment within that module. Similarly, if you are applying for multiple modules you need to apply separately for every module that you wish to be considered for. This is so you can explain how the extenuating circumstances have specifically affected that assessment or module. Please note that a link marked as unavailable indicates that you are now too late to apply for extenuating circumstances. Follow the prompts on e:Vision to complete the online claim.

Submit the original and independent supporting evidence to your Student Centre as soon as possible and within 5 to 10 working days. Claims will be considered within 5 working days from when the Student Centre receives your evidence. If your course is not taught on a University Campus, you can scan your evidence and send via the Helpdesk in e:vision (this will need to be verified by your Course Leader or appropriate member of staff) or, alternatively, your establishment may be able to submit it to the University on your behalf.

A claim must be made for each period of assessment within the academic year. For example, an accepted claim made for assessment due in June would not cover the July retrieval period; a new claim must be submitted. However, please be aware that the University will not normally accept a second claim should the difficulties that you state have affected your performance are the same as the first (except if it is because of one of the disabilities mentioned above).

You are expected to make use of the leave of absence process if your studies are interrupted for a lengthy period. Furthermore, you should seek the advice of Student Enabling Centre staff, who may be able to offer you support to cope with a persistent condition.
What can I do if I cannot access e:Vision to submit a claim for extenuating circumstances on or before the assessment due date?

There may be occasions when you are not able to formally apply for extenuating circumstances through your e:Vision account (for instance due to hospitalisation, IT issues, severe mental illness). If this is the case then you or somebody on your behalf, wherever possible, should telephone the University via 01902 321000 and ask to be put through to your Student Office and for a Helpdesk call to be logged on your behalf. This must be done on or before the assessment due date.

What evidence should be provided?

You must submit original, independent supporting evidence to your Student Centre along with your claim receipt or copy of your helpdesk call which can be printed from e:Vision. Examples include:

- A verified copy of a death certificate to cover bereavement claims relating to an immediate family member and evidence of the relationship if the name of the deceased is different to your own.
- Medical notes - if you have been ill, a doctor’s medical certificate/letter must be provided. This must clearly state the dates and duration of your illness and provide a clear diagnosis. The University will NOT accept a certificate in which the doctor reports that you said that you were ill. If the date of your medical note differs significantly from the dates cited on the note, then your claim will be rejected. Please note that it is the student’s responsibility to obtain a medical note. The University will not contact your GP on your behalf.
- A police crime report detailing the incident. A Crime Reference Number alone will not suffice. Letter from the Student Enabling Centre and/or the University Counselling services

If you feel that your circumstances are sensitive or personal and do not wish to disclose them on the form, you are strongly advised to either: make an appointment with your Student Office Manager, a University or independent counsellor, a member of the Student Enabling Centre, your Personal Tutor, Faculty Enabling Tutor or your Doctor. Please note that you must still apply online for each assessment before the assessment submission date. In the circumstances outlined above, you are not necessarily required to disclose your reason for claiming Extenuating Circumstances. Instead, you should state that you have sought advice and will be submitting evidence to support your claim. Evidence should be independent and will not be considered from University Academic staff.

Please take care in ensuring that you provide all necessary information when completing the stages of the e:Vision screens and when submitting evidence to your Student Centre. If any stages are incomplete your claim may not be considered.

Will I get original documents returned to me?

Yes, on request. When you are handing in the evidence at the Student Centre and wish to receive the original documentation back, please ask the member of staff to photocopy the documentation and verify the copy, stating that they have seen the original which you then keep.
Any original documents that are posted to the University will be retained and can be collected from the Student Centre on your next visit. If you are not able to visit in person and wish for original documentation to be returned, these can be posted back to you by the same method as you have posted it to us by request in a covering letter. Please note the University cannot be held responsible for documents lost in the post.

**What should I do if I have a minor, short term illness?**

For coursework assignments/group work only, minor and short term illnesses e.g. coughs, colds, headaches, stomach upsets are not covered by the extenuating circumstances process. Extension requests should be made instead.

The maximum extension permitted is 7 calendar days from the original due date. Your request for an extension must be made before your assignment deadline and you may be required to attach any work you have completed so far which will be used to assess your request. Remember that you should plan your work and most of it should be completed well before the submission deadline.

For examinations, in-class tests and practical assessments (e.g. one-off timetabled events requiring your attendance) please follow the process outlined above under ‘How do I make a claim’ and ‘When should I make a claim?’

**What should I do if I have a long term illness or personal difficulties?**

The University has a number of services to support students which include:

- School/Faculty based services e.g. Faculty Enabling Tutors, Personal Tutors
- Student Centres
- Counselling Services
- Student Enabling Centre
- Student Gateway
- Students’ Union Advice and Support Centre

If your illness or situation is likely to be ongoing, please speak with your disability adviser or Personal Tutor as soon as possible so that you can be reassessed. You may also need to speak with your academic counsellor who may, depending on your condition, recommend that you take a leave of absence if your performance on the course could be affected for a longer period.

On return from leave of absence you may need to provide the Student Enabling Centre or Personal Tutor evidence that you are well enough to study. It is possible that your support may need to be reassessed to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to help you as you resume study. You are allowed to request a leave of absence for a maximum of four semesters unless professional body requirements which govern your course prohibit this. It is always advisable to speak to staff in your Student Centre before you request a leave of absence. Staff will also be able to explain the financial implications of taking a leave of absence.

If you are an overseas student studying in the UK and consider it better to return to home for treatment please speak to an International Advisor in MX Student Centre for advice before you leave the UK. The UK Border Agency will need to be informed of your absence and the reason for it.
What happens after I have submitted my extenuating circumstances claim on e:Vision and submitted evidence to the Student Centre?

Your claim will be considered by the relevant Student Office Manager, who works as part of a team ensuring the same criteria in determining claim outcomes is applied across Student Centres. They will advise you of the outcome by e-mail, or via a call logged on the e:Vision Helpdesk. The decision will also be made available on your ‘My Assignments and Extenuating Circumstances’ page in e:Vision within five working days.

What will be the outcome of a claim?

If your claim is accepted you will be permitted to submit assessment at the next opportunity, which is usually within the current academic year. The work you submit will then be graded and you will receive the true grade (i.e. uncapped, as opposed to a resit submission). If you do not then pass this re-assessment you will still have a further right of resit at the next opportunity, which will be graded as such (i.e. capped).

If your claim is rejected you will receive an NS grade for the work not submitted. You will receive brief information and feedback as to why your claim was rejected.

If there is a delay in the assessment of your claim you should still prepare and submit assessment at the next opportunity within the academic year. Do not wait for the outcome of the claim before you begin preparing work or submit assessment, wherever possible.

What will happen if my claim is successful?

If you have not submitted the relevant work for a successful claim, or you have submitted but not achieved a pass, you will be offered the opportunity to reattempt the assessment. For initial module assessments this will be in the same academic year, usually in July, with resit assessments likely to run over into the following academic year.

The next available opportunity to resit initial assessments should be given in your module guide and will normally be within the same academic year unless, for example, it relates to placement-based assessment that needs to be rolled over to the next year. If in doubt please look on WOLF or contact the module leader, who will be able to confirm exactly when the next opportunity is.

If you do not take the assessment at the next opportunity, your assessment will become subject to the rules governing resit assessments i.e. your next attempt will be capped at 40% for Undergraduate students and 50% for Postgraduate students.

Does the granting of Extenuating Circumstances extend my registration period?

No. The granting of extenuating circumstances does not extend your maximum registration period. Only students who are on authorised Leave of Absence can have their maximum registration period extended by the same period (maximum 2 years).

International students studying in the UK, may not be able to use extenuating circumstances to extend beyond your normal registration period. You may be
required to provide confirmation that you have the necessary financial support to enable an extended period of study/living in the UK.

**What happens if my claim is rejected?**

You will be given the reason(s) as to why your claim has been unsuccessful. If you fail the assessment you will have to resit or retake the relevant assessment as normal, providing you are within your registration period (please refer to the University regulations if you are not sure of this period). If you pass on resit the maximum grade you can achieve for that assessment is 40% for Undergraduate students and 50% for Postgraduate students.

If, having read the reasons for rejection, you wish to appeal the decision you must make a written appeal explaining why you feel the decision is incorrect. This should be submitted to the Student Office Manager, along with any additional information or evidence if available. Please do this promptly - within two calendar weeks of the publication of the original decision. Your claim will be reconsidered by the Student Office Manager and you will be informed of the new decision.

If you do not have any further information or evidence and the Student Office Manager is still unable to accept your claim, your right to appeal then fall under the University’s Conduct and Appeals Unit. If you wish to pursue this route, you must contact the Conduct and Appeals Unit within 20 days of a final decision being given to you.

Please write to the following address:

Conduct and Appeals Unit  
University of Wolverhampton  
The Gateway @ The George  
MG Building  
Wulfruna Street  
Wolverhampton  
WV1 1LY

Please include the details relating to your case, information previously submitted and your reasons for appeal.

**What if my extenuating circumstances relate to resits?**

If you have valid extenuating circumstances that relate to re-assessment (a second attempt), you will normally be given the chance to take the resit again at the next available opportunity. The grade for this assessment will still be capped at 40% for Undergraduate students and 50% for Postgraduate students available opportunity. If you do not take the re-assessment at the next available opportunity, you will receive an NS grade for the assessment. Your overall module grade will then be given a retake status, requiring you to retake the whole module, including attending the lectures and retaking ALL the assessment. Your module grade will be capped to 40% for Undergraduate and 50% for Postgraduate students for each retake. You will also be charged for this.

**How do the rules of compensation apply to modules where extenuating circumstances have been granted?**

Compensation for modules with a 30-39% grade (subject to other compensation rules being met) is not considered until the Resit Assessment Award Boards that take place in July. Students who have modules that are eligible to be compensated will
be compensated irrespective of whether extenuating circumstances has been accepted against this module. If you do not wish to be compensated then you must log a call on the e:Vision helpdesk and ask for a note to be put on your records that compensation should not be applied. (Note that Postgraduate students are not entitled to have final grades compensated.)

**What if I submit my assessment and pass?**

If you did submit work and passed your assessment you may submit the assessment for a second time to improve your grade. **You must register your intention to submit the assessment again within 14 days of the publication of your results by sending an email via the Helpdesk on e:Vision.** If you register your intention, however, and the grade you get for the second attempt is lower than the first (including an NS for non-submission) this will be the grade awarded for the assessment.