



University of Birmingham

Guidance for Students on Extenuating Circumstances (reviewed July 2022)

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the [Code of Practice on Extenuating Circumstances](#).

Acronyms used in this document

EC(s)	Extenuating Circumstances
ECF	Extenuating Circumstances Form
ECO	Extenuating Circumstances Officer
ECP	Extenuating Circumstances Panel
RAP	Reasonable Adjustment Plan
RSA	Research Student Administration (Registry)
SCCA	Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals (Registry)
TSA	Taught Student Administration (Registry)

1. Introduction

- a. This guidance applies to students who are currently enrolled on a programme of study offered directly by us or at selected partner organisations. This guidance also applies to Degree Apprentices at the University of Birmingham.
- b. You **must** make sure you organise your time so that you can complete your assessments by the deadline set and be prepared for your exam.
- c. You need to build in some extra time in case anything does not go according to plan.
- d. You **must** also back up your work in case your computer fails or you lose data / files.
- e. This guidance does not cover temporary exam adjustments, extensions or deferrals for assessments which are dealt with under different procedures (see Appendix).

2. What are extenuating circumstances?

- a. Extenuating circumstances (ECs) are situations that:
 - i. You could not predict what would happen;
 - ii. You had no control over;
 - iii. Have seriously affected your ability to study or do your assessment.
- b. The following are valid reasons for making a claim for ECs if you are able to show they have prevented you from studying and / or doing your assessments. There are many more reasons than those listed below.¹
 - i. Illness or injury that has lasted for longer than one week and is serious enough to stop you from researching, writing, revising for your assessments and studying as normal.
 - ii. Death of someone close to you, or the significant, ongoing effects of grief following the death of someone close to you.

¹ Other reasons may be taken into account for non-standard programmes; these will be confirmed by your School / Department



- iii. Being the victim of crime (including harassment and assault).
- iv. Family difficulties (including crises, serious illness, unexpected childcare or caring responsibilities) meaning you need to provide significant support.
- v. Financial hardship that you could not have foreseen or controlled.
- vi. Major computer problems (including major Wi-Fi or system failure during an online assessment).

The following reasons for making an ECs claim will normally only be accepted from part-time students and students on Apprenticeship programmes:

- vii. Moving / Purchasing or unexpected renovations to a home – if the moving date clashes with teaching, submission of or preparation for assignments.
 - viii. Increased workload at your main employment.
 - ix. Change of employer / role.
- c. If you have a Reasonable Adjustment Plan (RAP) in place, this will not be automatically accepted as an EC, unless there has been a specific period of deterioration (for example, if you take medication to control a medical condition and have been advised to change your medication, this has a significant effect on you and you are ill as a result. You should submit an EC claim on the basis that whilst your RAP covers your medical condition, it does not take account of deterioration). You should also normally provide an updated letter/note from a registered medical professional that details that an exacerbation of the student's condition has occurred.

If you have a late diagnosis (for example, you have dyslexia diagnosed in the second semester of the first year), ECs can be considered as neither you nor the University has had a chance to put in place any reasonable adjustments. You should submit all evidence of the diagnosis, as well as the date of diagnosis, to the EC Panel for consideration.

Please note: students who have a RAP in place are not prevented from making a claim for ECs based on other reasons (i.e. reasons not linked to their medical condition such as those in 2b).

- d. Extenuating Circumstances submissions should be forwarded to your "Home" School. If in doubt you should consult your Personal Tutor or Wellbeing Officer.
- e. Claims based on the following will not be successful:
- i. Minor illnesses (such as colds).
 - ii. Minor computer problems that could have been prevented with adequate planning (for example, not allowing enough time to print your assessments or for interruptions in internet coverage whilst travelling).
 - iii. Stress and anxiety (including panic attacks) caused by the assessment (unless your claim is supported by medical evidence and diagnosed as an illness).
 - iv. Misreading your exam timetable or location details.
 - v. Having assessments close together.



- vi. Moving house or attending events (such as weddings) that are planned in advance of the exam timetable being published.
- vii. Employment or voluntary work (unless it is as a result of financial hardship that could not have been foreseen).
- viii. Sports activities (unless the deferral of an examination process could not be used, for example if you have received late confirmation of selection for your team). However, where the claim is made by a student who is a current member of the University's Elite Dual Career Athletes Pathway (EDCAP) the University will seek to support the claim where it is reasonable and appropriate to do so. UoB Sports will ensure that Colleges, via their Wellbeing Officers, are kept updated of the current members of EDCAP.
- ix. Extracurricular activities, such as evening classes.

Example 1:

You contract chicken pox the day before an exam. You could not predict what would happen, you have no control over your illness and you cannot sit the exam. So long as your medical note states the dates of your illness and how it has stopped you from sitting the exam, your **claim is likely to be successful**.

Example 2:

You test positive for COVID-19 the day before an online exam. You are feeling physically well and are able to revise and take the exam as planned, your **claim is likely to be unsuccessful**.

Example 3:

You test positive for COVID-19 the day before an in-person exam. You are feeling physically well and would be able to revise and take the exam as planned but you should consult and follow the University's current COVID-19 guidance, and if you are unable to take the examination you will be able to do so as a first sit in the supplementary

Example 4:

You book a holiday overseas, which begins three days before the end of the exam period. Your exam timetable is released and you realise that you will be away for your final exam. Your **claim will not be successful** as you had control of when you went on holiday and knew the dates of the exam period.



Example 5:

Your coursework is due at 12 noon. You arrive on campus at 11am to print and submit your coursework. The printers you usually use are busy so you go to a different building to print there, but the printers are not working. You manage to print your work at 11:55 am and are at the School Office at 12:05 pm but you are told your work is late. Your **claim will not be successful** because you have not allowed yourself enough time to print and submit your work.

Your course work is due at 12 noon. You attempt to submit your work online at 11.45 am however the internet where you are is currently down. You manage to submit online at 12.05 am and are told your work is late. Your **claim will not be successful** because you have not allowed enough time to submit your work.

f. Exam Irregularities and Plagiarism investigation

Where, following an investigation, there has been a decision that poor academic practice or plagiarism has occurred, an application for ECs will not normally be accepted, as this process should not be used to change the outcome of a plagiarism investigation. Instead, where you have submitted an assignment, assessment or other coursework, which has been investigated under the Code of Practice on Plagiarism (2016-17 cohort) or Code of Practice on Academic Integrity (2017-18 cohort onwards) you will need to make the Academic Integrity Officer aware of your extenuating circumstances before or during the meeting, with appropriate evidence where possible. This will be considered when the sanction is being decided rather than in applying the category of plagiarism.

An interruption to an exam or class test due to a query about a suspected irregularity will not be accepted as good reason for ECs in that assessment. Therefore a claim for ECs for that assessment or the relevant module will not be successful.

g. Group Work

For assessments of a single piece of work prepared by a group (i.e. where one mark is given to the group), the group can submit one ECs claim if the circumstances affected all members.

If you as an individual student are affected by ECs, but not the wider group, you can submit a claim to the EC Panel, indicating that the affected assessment is group work. The EC Panel will determine the suitable approach to the group. For example, if the assessment is a single piece of work prepared by a group and results in one mark, the



ECs can be taken into account for all members of the group, even though they haven't all submitted an EC Form. The EC Panel retains the right to exercise discretion in this regard.

Where the group work is based solely upon individual contribution, the claim will be dealt with as an individual claim and on an individual basis.

Confidentiality will be respected as per section 5.

3. What should I do if I think I have ECs?

- a. If you believe you have ECs and can provide evidence of this, you can make a claim using the Extenuating Circumstances Form (ECF). You must submit your claim as soon as possible. Do not wait to submit your ECF for any reason, even if you do not yet have all your evidence. Your School will have individual deadline dates for submission of ECs in relation to exams² and other assessments.
- b. If your ECs happen on the day of an exam (whether it is campus-based or an online examination), you must submit your ECF **within 24 hours of the scheduled end time of the exam** (for example, if you have a 3-hour exam starting at 09:00 am, the scheduled end time would be 12:00 noon, therefore you will have 24 hours from 12:00 noon to submit your ECF).
- c. Your School or Department will publish the EC procedure in your student handbook. This will include details of the staff member you will need to submit your ECF to.

4. Evidence

- a. You will need to provide evidence with your ECF to support your claim. You should provide evidence by the advertised College deadline.
- b. You are responsible for getting and submitting all evidence you want to use to support your ECF. We will not gather evidence for you to support your ECF, unless there has been a disruption in a centrally managed examination venue, such as a fire alarm (please refer to section 3.3 of the Code of Practice). If this happens, Academic Services will arrange for a group ECs submission on behalf of all students affected, together with a recommendation for an appropriate outcome. You may opt out of such a group submission or, conversely, you may submit additional information if you feel that you have been particularly affected.
- c. As a guide, we accept the following evidence.

Extenuating Circumstance	Evidence includes:
You have had to self-isolate due to COVID-19 and your work has been affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-isolation note obtained by you via the NHS website (https://111.nhs.uk/isolation-note/) • Can be obtained if you <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - have symptoms of coronavirus - live with someone who has symptoms of coronavirus

² Exams are generally defined as assessments which are marked in a way which means that individual feedback is not prepared for students within 15 working days.



<p>You experience a technological issue during an online assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is accepted that this may be difficult to evidence, but you should provide whatever evidence is available (e.g. screenshot) if possible.
<p>You have a serious illness or have had an accident</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter from a healthcare practitioner or hospital • Must be on official, headed paper • Must be written at the time of the illness or accident • Must say you are or will be unfit to study at the time of the assessment. • Evidence of appropriate engagement with the University's Wellbeing Service may be accepted as medical evidence. • Evidence of appropriate prescriptions may be accepted as medical evidence, provided that a detailed explanation of the impact of the condition upon you and the purpose of the prescription is also included with your claim. Copies of referral letters should also be included where available.* <p><u>Evidence from online GP services</u></p> <p>You are strongly encouraged to see your <u>registered GP</u> (where possible) for completion of medical certificates. Your registered GP will always have access to your full medical record and will therefore be able to provide an accurate assessment of your medical condition – but there is no guarantee that other GPs will.</p> <p>It is understood that consultations with your own registered GP may be offered in a variety of formats, including online, particularly as a result of the pandemic. However, the use of online GP services, who are <u>not</u> your registered GP, is discouraged. Online service providers are unlikely to have access to medical records – they are in general reliant on information given to them by you only, and so will not be able to verify its accuracy.</p> <p>The weight given by the University to medical evidence varies depending on who completes it and whether there is any corroborating evidence available to the GP. If you provide evidence from an online GP service, this may therefore be given less weight, and/or you may be asked to consult with your registered GP for certification.</p>
<p>A very close relative is seriously ill</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter from a healthcare practitioner or hospital confirming the circumstances



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter from a doctor, nurse or relevant professional confirming the effect the circumstances are having on your ability to do the assessment • Must be on official, headed paper or have an official stamp • Must confirm the dates of the illness
A very close family member or friend dies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical letter explaining how your grief is affecting your ability to do the assessment • Death certificate • Order of Service for funeral • Death Announcement
You are the victim of a crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police report giving the date of the crime • Must be on official, headed paper <p>We do not accept crime reference numbers alone without further information</p>
You have serious family difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter from a doctor, solicitor or other professional person confirming the circumstances and dates (must be on official, headed paper) • Evidence from a relevant, third party, professional of how the problem is affecting your ability to do the assessment
There is a significant change to your financial circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bank statements showing your current financial circumstances • Letter of support from services set up to assist with students suffering financial hardship • Must be on official, headed paper.

*If you are unable to obtain any of the medical evidence described above please consult an appropriate member of staff (e.g. Wellbeing Officer) for advice on what other forms of evidence may be appropriate to include within your claim.

d. Evidence must be:

- i. Genuine – we will reject your claim if we find that any of the evidence you submit is false, forged or has been tampered with in any way;
 - ii. Independent – we do not accept letters from relatives or friends;
 - iii. Written in English – if the evidence was written in a language other than English, you must also supply an official translated copy;
 - iv. Dated; and
 - v. On official, headed paper or have an official stamp or seal of the issuing authority.
- e. The evidence you supply does not have to be an original document. We will accept photocopied or scanned documents, but we may decide we need to see the original as well.



- f. We regularly check the evidence received to make sure it is genuine. By submitting your ECF, you are giving us permission to carry out these checks. If you submit evidence which we find is false, forged or has been tampered with in any way, we may start a disciplinary investigation and your claim will not be allowed.

5. What happens after you submit your ECF

- a. We will convene an Extenuating Circumstances Panel (ECP). The ECP will normally be made up of a maximum of five staff members, which will be from your School or Department.
- b. Your case will be discussed sensitively and confidentially to the ECP. This means that only the ECP will know the details of your case. Should the ECP make a recommendation to the Board of Examiners, the content of your ECF will not be discussed outside of the ECP. If you don't want the ECP to know the content of your ECF, when you submit it you can write "strictly confidential and for the attention of the Chair of the ECP only" on the envelope. This means that only the Chair will see the content and will inform the ECP that evidence has been received and, if appropriate, it is valid to support your claim.
- c. You cannot ask for your grades to be raised under any circumstances (unless there has been a miscount when marking).
- d. An ECP will recommend one of the following. Whilst you can indicate to the EC Panel (on your EC Form) which outcome you would favour most, the EC Panel may agree on a different outcome. The outcome you favour is not guaranteed to be the outcome you receive.

Possible Outcome	What this means
Allow further sit / submit opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will have another attempt at the assessment and the mark achieved will not be capped at the pass mark. • Should you fail the additional attempt, you will be able to reattempt the assessment, following the usual University legislation. • The mark from the additional attempt will replace any mark that was affected by your ECs even where the previous mark was higher.
Allow further re-sit / re-submit opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will have another attempt at the assessment but this mark will be capped at the pass mark. • Should you fail the assessment, you will not be able to reattempt it. • The mark from the re-sit / re-submit opportunity will replace any mark that was affected by your ECs.
Waive late penalties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any penalties applied to your work for being handed in late will be removed • If the assessment was a resit, then your mark will still be capped at the pass mark.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If the total mark received after the penalties have been removed is below the pass mark, you will fail the assessment.
Repeat the year in full (internal candidate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You will need to attempt the year again, but your marks will not be capped.• Your original marks will be replaced by your repeat year marks.• Should you fail any of the assessments, you will be able to have another attempt at these.• You <u>will</u> be expected to attend teaching sessions.• As an internal student, you may incur additional fees for this year (for example, on a pro-rata basis or an additional year of tuition fees).
Resit the year in full (external candidate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You will need to attempt the year again and your marks will be capped at the pass mark.• Your original marks will be replaced by your resit year marks, unless you passed the original assessment.• Should you fail any of your assessments, you will not have another attempt at these.• You <u>may</u> be expected to attend teaching sessions.• As an external student, you will not normally be required to pay additional fees
Marks scaling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scaling is the adjustment of marks for a group of students.• Scaling may be applied if there has been a disruption in an examination venue, e.g. a fire alarm; it is therefore not listed on the ECs form as an option for students to request.• A decision to scale marks will only be taken in discussion with Academic Services and with the agreement of the external examiner, following consideration of the impact of the disruption upon student performance.• Scaling will be applied to all students affected by a disruption rather than to individuals.• Scaling is not guaranteed as the outcome of any disruption in an examination venue; an alternative outcome may be deemed more appropriate.
ECs carried forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your circumstances will be considered when a Board of Examiners (BoE) is discussing your degree classification at the end of your studies.
Award Notwithstanding Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This option may not be available if you are studying for a professional certificate or a body outside of the University accredits your programme. You should check with your Personal Academic Tutor before requesting this option.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Board of Examiners may decide that you will receive a qualification or higher degree classification, if you have failed to pass the requirements but have ECs.
Action already taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none">You have already had an extension for coursework, etc.
No action required / <u>submission rejected</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Your ECs have been rejected and no allowances will be made.

6. Recommendations and Decision

- An ECP will be held after the deadline for your ECF but before the BoE meets. The ECP will make a recommendation about your ECs and the BoE will then make the final decision taking into account the recommendation of the ECP.
- Where the ECP takes place in January, your School / Department will confirm the outcome / recommendation to you and will advise when you can expect to receive the BoE decision (expected to be in June).
- Following the ECP in June (after the May / June assessment period) or September (after the August supplementary period), you will receive the final decision once the BoE has taken place.
- If you do not understand or are not satisfied with the outcome, you should speak to your Personal Academic Tutor. Your School / Department will also have an Extenuating Circumstances Officer (ECO) who you can contact about the outcome of your claim.



Appendix – Assessment Adjustments flowchart

Engaging with the Extenuating Circumstances process is not the only way for a student to have a situation which has affected their assessment taken into account. The below flowchart provides some information about the different types of scenario that can impact on assessment and provides guidance about the most helpful and appropriate process in each case (please note: if you need to see a bigger version of this diagram please visit [this link](#)).

