

Extenuating Circumstances Policy

Introduction

1. The Final Board of Examiners will take into account any information provided by a student on the adverse effect of illness or other factors on assessment performance. Where a case for extenuating circumstances is accepted, then the Board may take a range of actions to ensure that as far as possible, students are not disadvantaged in their assessment whilst also preserving the integrity of standards and awards.
2. The Final Board of Examiners can usually only do this if it made aware of the circumstances in advance and they are properly documented (e.g. by medical evidence). If therefore there are factors that have affected students' ability to complete or undertake assessed work, these must be made known to the School as soon as possible.

Definition

3. Extenuating circumstance are circumstances that significantly affect a student's performance in an assessed piece of work, or affects a student's ability to complete an assessed piece of work or project, or prevents a student from undertaking an assessed piece of work or project altogether. These circumstances should normally be unforeseen and beyond a student's control.
4. Examples of extenuating circumstances include but are not limited to:
 - Personal illness
 - Worsening of an ongoing illness or disability including mental health condition
 - Serious illness or bereavement of a close relative or friend
 - Extreme family situations
 - Becoming a victim of crime
5. In all cases, students should provide as much supporting evidence as possible.
6. Ongoing medical or mental health conditions are not usually considered to fall within the definition of extenuating circumstances because NFTS supports the student through Reasonable Adjustments. Disabled students may usually only use the extenuating circumstances provision where there is good reason for not having advised the School of their disability prior to their assessment. All disabled students are encouraged to contact the Student Support and Wellbeing team on or before registration with the School with a view to agreeing reasonable adjustments

However, there may be times when a student with a disability or ongoing medical or mental health condition needs to use the Extenuating Circumstances procedures and this should be used where:

- Their condition has altered in a significant way since they started their course and any reasonable adjustments were put in place, and this has had an impact on the student's performance;
- A student has experienced an acute episode or crisis
- A student has a mental health problem which may fluctuate unpredictably
- A student experiences a seriousness worsening of their condition
- Reasonable adjustments were agreed too late to be applied for the piece of assessed work affected;
- A new diagnosis is received and reasonable adjustments could not be put in place in time;
- A student has a fluctuating condition.

Applying for Extenuating Circumstances

7. Responsibility for notifying the School of possible extenuating circumstances lies with the student who should notify the Registrar as soon as possible in advance of the assessment deadline or submission date.
8. Retrospective claims for extenuating circumstances shall usually only be accepted where a student is incapable of contacting the School before the assessment deadline or date. In these circumstances, the student is required to inform the School within no later than ten working days of the assessment date where practicable. The student will be required to provide evidence of their inability to submit a claim in advance of the assessment date. A claim cannot be delayed on the grounds of sensitive personal, family, or cultural reasons.
9. The student should set out in writing the exact nature of the extenuating circumstances and describe the impact of them, including on the assessment concerned. As much supporting evidence as possible should be provided. A claim for extenuating circumstances on medical grounds should normally be supported by written evidence from a registered medical practitioner. All evidence must be submitted in English. Where evidence from a medical practitioner is not available, the reason for this should be explained in the claim.
10. Other evidence might include:
 - A hospital discharge letter
 - A letter from an external support service or counsellor
 - Letter from the police or the court
 - A police report, including a crime reference number
 - A solicitor's letter
 - A death certificate
 - An order of service
11. Evidence must cover the time period for which the student is requesting Extenuating Circumstances to be applied for.

12. In the event that a student's circumstances are such that there is no independent documentary evidence, the Extenuating Circumstances Panel will expect to see evidence that someone within the School was alerted that they were experiencing difficulties with their work. This may be a letter from the Student Support and Wellbeing team or from a course coordinator.

Confidentiality

13. Extenuating circumstances claims will often involve the processing of sensitive personal data. The School will make every effort to ensure that the data is kept confidential and only supplied to members of the Extenuating Circumstances Panel appointed to consider the claim.
14. Student whose extenuating circumstances are private and sensitive are encouraged to discuss their situation with the Registrar or the Student Support and Wellbeing team in confidence, who will advise on the appropriate course of action.

Consideration process

15. On receipt of a claim, an Extenuating Circumstances Panel chaired by the Registrar and comprising of the student's Head of Department and a minimum of two other members shall consider whether a submission for extenuating circumstances should be accepted. Members of the Panel may be drawn from other departments and./or from professional service areas. The student does not attend this panel meeting.
16. The Panel will take into account the following when considering the claim:
- The seriousness of the circumstances, including the length of time they lasted;
 - the documentary evidence provided;
 - The amount of work affected by the circumstances;
 - Whether any grade achieved under the circumstances was inconsistent with those achieved in other period of study unaffected by extenuating circumstances.
17. Where a claim for extenuating circumstances is accepted, the Panel will apply academic judgement in formulating a recommendation to the Board of Examiners, and will always seek to act in the best interest of the student.
18. Where a student has failed to achieve the required standard for one or more assessed pieces of work the Panel may recommend to the Final Board of Examiners one of the following:
- (i) to set aside any grade(s) assigned and allow the student a new attempt according to a timetable agreed by the Board; or
 - (ii) to waive the affected piece(s), but only if the course learning outcomes have been met through the student's other assessed work; or
 - (iii) where the work was a marginal fail consider the student as a pass.
19. Where a student has failed to complete one or more assessed pieces of work, the Panel may recommend to the Final Board of Examiners one of the following either:

- (i) allow the student a new attempt according to a timetable agreed by the Board;
or
- (ii) waive the requirement to complete the work, but only if the course learning outcomes have been met through the student's other assessed work.

20. If the Extenuating Circumstances Panel decides that a student's claim of extenuating circumstances is not valid, it will reject it and not make any recommendation to the Final Board of Examiners.

Appeals

21. A student may appeal against the decision of the Extenuating Circumstances Panel in relation to a submitted claim on one of the following grounds only:

- there was a procedural error in the decision taken by an Extenuating Circumstances Committee or Final Board of Examiners when considering the circumstances; or
- the student is presenting new or additional material evidence, which, for valid reason, they were unable to provide at the time of submitting the extenuating circumstances claim.

22. Students may appeal against the decision of the Final Board of Examiners in by using the Academic Appeal Procedure.

https://nfts.co.uk/sites/default/files/policies/Academic_Appeals_Procedure.pdf

Last approved by ASC July 2022