

## Introduction

The University recognises that there may be occasions during the course of your studies where you are unable to effectively complete your assessment(s), or where your performance in your assessment(s) has been affected.

This document provides guidance on the University's Extenuating Circumstances process, and what you should take into consideration when submitting an Extenuating Circumstances Application Form ('Application Form').

A copy of the Application Form is available on the University website under 'Student Handbook'.

The University's Extenuating Circumstances process enables you to notify your School/Collaborative Partner of your circumstances so that they may be taken into account when making a decision in relation to your progress or results. The sooner your School/Collaborative Partner is made aware of the difficulties you are experiencing, the easier it will be for them to help you. However, you should be aware that the submission of an Application Form is not in itself a guarantee that your application will be accepted.

A copy of the Extenuating Circumstances Regulations (Taught Provision) ('Regulations') are available at [www.tees.ac.uk/academicregulations](http://www.tees.ac.uk/academicregulations), and you are strongly recommended to read these Regulations before completing your Application Form.

## Who is this guidance applicable to?

This guidance is applicable to any student enrolled on a taught course who wishes to submit an Application Form. Students enrolled on a research degree course should follow the 'Extenuating Circumstance Regulations (Research Degree programmes)'.

## What are Extenuating Circumstances?

For clarity, Extenuating Circumstances are defined in the Regulations as:

***“Unforeseen and unpreventable circumstances outside the control of the student, which have significantly affected performance and/or attendance in a summative assessment and could not have been remedied in the time available”.***

## What are the types of Extenuating Circumstances?

It is important that, where possible, you notify your School/Collaborative Partner **in advance** of any circumstances that you anticipate may affect your performance in your assessment(s). Therefore, it is important that you first speak to a member of academic staff such as your Personal Tutor, or another appropriate member of academic staff.

There are a number of different remedies available, and these are:

1. **Short Extension:** an extension to the assessment deadline(s) of up to and including **7 calendar days**. It is usually granted for one module only. It is normally only available for first submission (not reassessment), due to the requirement for timely progression to the next level of the course.
2. **Long Extension:** an extension to an assessment deadline of a period longer than 7 calendar days, and may apply to more than one module. The length of extension granted will be a matter of academic judgement, based on a student's circumstances. However, the new deadline should allow for timely progression to the next level of the course, and for this reason a Long Extension will not normally be offered for a reassessment.
3. **Deferred Submission:** normally only available to part-time students, and not normally available for a reassessment. It is a longer extension that allows a student to submit their assessment up to a period of one calendar year from the original submission date.
4. **Mitigating Circumstances:** available where it is felt that an extension, deferral or interruption is not appropriate. In such circumstances, the Application Form will be considered by a Mitigating Circumstances Board.
5. **Interruption of Studies:** available for a maximum period of 2 years in total over the length of the course or the maximum registration period (whichever is the shorter). A formal agreement should be made, which defines the year/level on which studies will be resumed, and providing either an agreed date for the resumption of studies, or a date as to when the position will be reviewed and who will initiate that process (School/Collaborative Partner or student). The last date for a request for an interruption of studies will normally be prior to the completion of formal teaching weeks. This includes all activities within the defined teaching weeks of a semester. **Please note that if you wish this option you will need to complete a separate University Interruption/Withdrawal Form.**

Should it be considered appropriate the Extenuating Circumstances Application Form should be completed, which is available from your School/Collaborative Partner Administrative Office or on the University's Student Handbook website at <http://www.tees.ac.uk/studenthandbook>. Alternatively, arrangements can be made to post or email a copy of the Application Form to you if you are unable to collect a copy for valid reasons such as illness, distance from University or work commitments. In such cases, please contact your School/Collaborative Partner Administrative Office in the first instance.

### How does the Extenuating Circumstances process relate to the assessment process?

It is a condition of your award that you are required to successfully complete all your module(s) on your course. As such, Extenuating Circumstances are considered for all forms of summative assessment, including:

- Examinations;
- Coursework, including in-class tests, performances and presentations;
- Placements;
- Fieldwork.

If your application is granted this will NOT result in a change of a module mark, but may result in a deferral being recorded for the assessment(s).

### What is normally considered to be an Extenuating Circumstance?

Your application will only be granted where you can demonstrate that your circumstances significantly affected your ability to complete your assessment(s). The following are generally considered to be acceptable Extenuating Circumstances (this list is not exhaustive):

- Serious ill health (which may include an acute episode, a disability or a chronic condition, which is not covered by agreed support already in place).
- Significant personal accident or injury.
- Acute personal or emotional trauma (which may include acute anxiety or depression, family breakdown, breakdown of close personal relationship, death or serious illness of family member, significant other, or close friend).
- Victim of crime.
- Additional impact of a disability.
- Complications in a pregnancy.
- Jury Service.
- Serious transport difficulties, which could not have been avoided.
- Other significant/exceptional factors for which there is evidence of an impact on performance and/or attendance in a summative assessment and could not have been remedied in the time available. This could include religious/cultural issues and their impact on the individual.

Example:

*You contracted an illness the day before your examination. You could not predict what would happen, you had no control over your illness and you did not feel well enough to sit the examination. You went to see a medical practitioner and, provided your medical note states the dates of your illness and how it has prevented you from sitting your examination, your application is likely to be successful.*

## What is NOT normally considered to be an Extenuating Circumstance?

The University expects all its students to be able to manage minor illnesses and events that may be distressing as part of everyday life. In such circumstances, you are expected to continue studying and participating in scheduled learning activities. The following are generally considered as not acceptable Extenuating Circumstances (this list is not exhaustive):

- Study related circumstances (personal equipment failure, printer problems, failure to take back-up copy of work, misreading the examination timetable, oversleeping, taking the wrong examination).
- Normal exam stress or anxiety experienced during revision or during the assessment period.
- Personal disruptions within the student's control (moving house, change of job, normal job pressure, holidays, weddings, failed travel arrangements, financial issues, poor time-management, routine medical appointments, disruption to routine caring responsibilities).
- Grounds of religion, unless notification was given at the start of the academic year.
- Foreseeable and preventable circumstances.
- Statement of a medical condition without reasonable evidence (medical or otherwise) to support the case.
- Complaints against staff or in relation to delivery of the module/programme. (These are managed through the University's Student Complaints Policy and Procedure).
- Medical circumstances outside the relevant assessment or learning period for which appropriate adjustments for extenuating circumstances have already been made.
- Long term health condition, for which the student is already receiving reasonable and appropriate adjustments.
- Medical condition supported only by retrospective evidence (such as a doctor's note stating that the student was seen after the illness, and that the student declared they had been ill previously).
- Late disclosure of circumstances, where the student could reasonably be expected to have contacted a member of staff about the problem, but did not do so.

Example:

*You booked a holiday, which begins three days before the end of your assessment period. You review your examination timetable and realise that you will be away for your final examination. Your claim is unlikely to be successful as this was a foreseeable and preventable circumstance.*

## What if I have an ongoing or a long term health condition, a disability or learning difficulty?

If you have an ongoing disability or health condition that you can foresee will affect your assessment(s), you should contact Disability Services in Student and Library Services (or equivalent in a Collaborative Partner) by emailing [disability@tees.ac.uk](mailto:disability@tees.ac.uk) to arrange support, if you have not already done so, in order to arrange appropriate support and reasonable adjustments.

If you have been in touch with Disability Services, it is expected that the support you have been provided with has taken into account and made adjustment for ongoing circumstances related to your disability/health condition as the impact is often foreseeable and therefore does not require further extenuation. However, it is recognised that, on occasion, support may not yet have been arranged and/or the impact of existing conditions can change, and these may be taken into account when considering an application. In such circumstances, you will usually need to demonstrate that the exacerbation occurred close to the deadline date or date of the examination. The longer the period between the deadline date for submission of your assessment(s) or examination(s) and the exacerbation or unforeseen change, the less likely it is that your application will be successful.

To this end, it is important that if you are submitting an Application Form, you clearly and explicitly include the dates of when you experienced the exacerbation or unforeseen change and the period of time it had an impact on you. In addition, any further details as to the symptoms and the impact on your ability to complete your assessment(s) or sit your examination(s) would also be useful.

If you have support in place but experience a sudden worsening or increase in the impact of a disability or medical condition you should discuss this with your School/ Collaborative Partner and/or Disability Adviser as soon as possible so they can review your support. Where reasonable and practicable, additional adjustments may be made for you to avoid having to make repeated claims for extenuation based on the same set of circumstances.

In circumstances which are likely to affect you over a longer time period, and support and adjustments are not enabling you to progress, you may wish to consider interrupting your studies.

## What should I think about when considering submitting an Application Form?

### Do:

- Review the grounds for applying for extenuating circumstances (see appendix 1 of the Regulations).
- Seek guidance from your Personal Tutor (or equivalent) if you are experiencing difficulties in completing your work on time.
- Meet with a tutor prior to the submission/examination date.

- Discuss with a tutor whether an extension would be appropriate and if so, what type.
- Request an extension where you are unable to meet the deadline.
- Submit an Application Form that covers all module assessments you are taking during the period of difficulty.
- Submit the Application Form prior to the submission/examination date and for claims of Mitigating Circumstances within **14 calendar days** from the submission or examination date.
- Complete all sections of the Application Form.
- Include evidence to support your application.
- Make sure that you have received a receipt from your School/College when you submit your Application Form.

### Don't:

- Apply for mitigating circumstances if you have been granted a long extension for the same set of circumstances.
- Apply for any formative assessment pieces of assessment that do not count to your overall module mark.
- Use evidence that is undated or solely from family members supporting your application. You should provide independent evidence.

### What is the deadline date for submission of an Application Form?

It is your responsibility to use the Extenuating Circumstances process within the specified timeframe cited in the Regulations.

If you are unable to submit your assignment(s) by the published deadline, you are advised, in the first instance, to apply for an extension prior to the assessment submission date. If you feel unable to seek an Extension or Interruption, an Application Form should be returned indicating that you wish to submit a claim for Mitigating Circumstances. The Application Form, together with any relevant supporting evidence, **must** be returned to the School/Collaborative Partner within **14 calendar days** from the submission or examination date. Where you have multiple assessments being submitted around the same time then you are advised to submit one application, within 14 calendar days, of the first submission date.

If you feel unwell in an examination, and there is no way to raise this with a member of staff before the examination, then you need to submit an Application Form and tick the Mitigating Circumstances box. As such, you will still need to submit your Application Form with supporting evidence.

### What information should be included on your Application Form?

You should first ensure that you carefully read through the Application Form making sure that you follow each instruction. You should:

- Read the Regulations available at: [www.tees.ac.uk/academicregulations](http://www.tees.ac.uk/academicregulations).

- Think carefully about whether your Extenuating Circumstances are likely to be accepted as 'extenuating'.
- Check how much time you have to prepare your Application Form so that you are not rushed.
- Keep all of your supporting statements clear and to the point. A longer statement does not increase your chances of your case being accepted and may make it difficult for the reviewers to identify the key elements in your case.
- Ensure that you have completed each section that applies to you. In particular, the correct module, assessment details of the relevant assessment(s) and the dates of impact, must be indicated on the form.
- Ensure you have sought guidance from your Personal Tutor or other relevant member of academic staff before submitting your Application Form.

The decision on whether to accept your application is solely made on your submission and the documentary evidence you submit. It is therefore your responsibility to submit all of the relevant independent supporting evidence. Examples of evidence which the University considers to be appropriate include:

- Letters from doctors or counsellors (medical practitioner);
- Relevant medical information;
- Proof of attendance at hospital;
- Death certificate;
- Solicitors' letter;
- Police Crime Number or Report;
- Letter of support from a Personal Tutor or another appropriate member of academic staff (but this cannot normally be the only form of evidence);
- Statement from family members (when it is submitted in conjunction with other acceptable evidence).

Dates of evidence must correspond with the extenuating circumstances detailed. If the basis of your application is illness, you must provide a certificate from a medical practitioner, specifying the dates of the illness.

For clarity, **not** acceptable evidence is:

- Self-Certification;
- Personal statement;
- Anything undated or without the student's name;
- Personal data relating to a third party which does not contain the written consent of to share their personal data or where the individual's personal data has not been anonymised.

Please note that it is a very serious offence to submit a fraudulent Application Form and/or documentary evidence, and any fraudulent applications may be considered under the University's Academic Misconduct Regulations (Taught Provision).

Application Forms submitted without relevant supporting evidence will not normally be accepted. However, the University acknowledges that, in some situations, there may be legitimate reasons which make it impossible to submit documentary

evidence. If this is the case, you must explain on your Application Form why it is not possible to submit such evidence.

A statement from a Personal Tutor, or another appropriate member of academic staff, may be helpful, but it would not be considered sufficient in itself. Evidence from family members or fellow students would not usually be accepted under normal circumstances. Please refer to the list of examples of acceptable and non-acceptable Extenuating Circumstances cited above for further guidance.

If evidence is not available at the time of submitting your Application Form, you will need to indicate this on your Application Form and state when it will be submitted. Please do not wait for a piece of evidence if this means you will miss the Application Form submission deadline date.

Please be assured that the information which you provide will be kept in strict confidence and will only be shared with the necessary parties in order to process and consider it. If you are uncomfortable with disclosing highly personal or confidential information, such information should be submitted in a sealed envelope marked 'Confidential'.

Evidence in support of your Application Form must be legible. Poorly scanned, cropped (missing information) or faded documents will not be accepted. If you have provided photocopies, you may be required to provide a designated member of staff in a School/Collaborative Partner with sight of the original documents. Evidence accompanying your Application Form must be in English. Evidence obtained overseas which is written in another language must be accompanied by a certified translation.

You are responsible for paying the costs incurred in obtaining supporting evidence. You should keep a copy of your Application Form and accompanying evidence, as any documents submitted will not be returned. If you are submitting your Application Form by post you are advised to use the Recorded Delivery service.

## How do I apply?

You should complete the Application Form available on the University's Student Handbook website <http://www.tees.ac.uk/studenthandbook>. Alternatively, a paper copy is available from your School/Collaborative Partner Administrative Office.

It is recommended that where the submission of your application will affect your progression to the next level/year of study you should seek financial advice before submitting your Application Form as this may affect your student funding entitlement. Staff based in the Student & Library Services can assist with this. Alternatively, independent advice can be obtained from Advisors based in the Students' Union Support Services (SUSS). The contact details of these services are provided below.

You are expected to speak with either your Personal Tutor, or another appropriate member of academic staff, to discuss your circumstances wherever possible before the submission/examination date (except where circumstances arise on the day of submission/ examination). It may be identified that it would be more appropriate to be

grant a Short, or Long Extension. This person should sign your Application Form to demonstrate that a meeting has taken place.

Following completion of your Application Form you should submit this to your School/ Collaborative Partner Administrative Office.

### How will my application be considered?

An application will be considered by the appropriate member of staff, as follows:

Short Extensions:	Module Leader or Course Leader
Long Extensions:	Associate Dean (or nominee)
Deferred Submissions:	Associate Dean (or nominee)
Mitigating Circumstances:	Mitigating Circumstances Board

Please note that decisions will be purely based on the content of your Application Form and any supporting evidence. No detailed feedback on your application will be given. However, your School/ Collaborative Partner should promptly notify you of any adjustment that has been approved, or if your application is unsuccessful. Until such confirmation is received, you must continue to attend classes and submit work as required.

### What happens if I miss the deadline for submitting my application?

In exceptional circumstances, Application Forms may be submitted after the deadline date. Late applications will only be considered if there is evidence that you could not have submitted your Application Form within the timescales. The decision on whether to accept a late application is at the discretion of the relevant School/Collaborative Partner nominee as cited above.

### How will I be informed of the outcome?

You should be informed of the outcome of your application in writing, normally via electronic communication (for example e-Vision).

In cases of mitigating circumstances, the Mitigating Circumstances Board will normally inform you of its decision within **15 calendar days** of the Board. In the event that mitigating circumstances have not been granted the reason(s) for this decision will be provided.

### What if I am unhappy with the outcome?

The following processes should be followed if you are unhappy with the decision you have received.

- **Extension, Deferred submission:** If an Extension or Deferred submission is declined, you may appeal to the Dean or Head of Collaborative Partner, in writing, for a final decision. The appeal must be submitted in writing within **10 calendar days** of receipt of the written communication. The Dean or Head of

Collaborative Partner's decision is final and is not subject to further appeal within the University.

- **Mitigating Circumstances:** In exceptional circumstances, within **10 calendar days** of the decision of the Mitigating Circumstances Board being communicated to you in writing, you may make a written request for a Review. A Review Application Pack is available from the University's website at [www.tees.ac.uk/studentregulations](http://www.tees.ac.uk/studentregulations) (within the University Application Packs section). You must cite the grounds and reasons for your Review, and you must provide all relevant supporting evidence. The completed form should be sent either via post to the Office of Student Complaints, Appeals & Regulations (OSCAR), Teesside University, Middlesbrough, TS1 3BX, or via email to [oscar@tees.ac.uk](mailto:oscar@tees.ac.uk).

### Where can I obtain advice and support?

Support services are available via Students' Union Support Services (SUSS). A Students' Union Adviser can be contacted by telephoning 01642 342247, or by emailing [suss@tees-su.org.uk](mailto:suss@tees-su.org.uk).

In addition, you may also wish to seek wellbeing support or financial guidance from Student and Library Services, by telephoning 01642 342277, or emailing [studenthelp@tees.ac.uk](mailto:studenthelp@tees.ac.uk).

Guidance on the content of the Extenuating Circumstances Regulations (Taught Provision) can be obtained from the Office of Student Complaints, Appeals & Regulations (OSCAR) by telephoning 01642 384210, or emailing [oscar@tees.ac.uk](mailto:oscar@tees.ac.uk).

## Guidance for Students Experiencing Personal Challenges

