

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

SCHOOL OF MATHEMATICS

Extenuating Circumstances: Guidance for Students 2014-2015

At various stages during their period of study, students may encounter significant personal difficulties which they feel may have affected their ability to study for, or, complete academic assessments, including examinations. The University of Birmingham refers to these difficulties as “Extenuating Circumstances” and they may include significant illness; the death or serious illness of a close relative; family crisis directly affecting the student; exceptional and unforeseen financial hardship. Circumstances which are not considered Extenuating Circumstances include minor illnesses; assessments or examinations scheduled closely together; personal or domestic events (weddings, holidays, moving house, etc.); sports activities. The Code of Practice on Extenuating Circumstances is available on the School of Mathematics webpage. Note that chronic or long-term conditions such as a physical disability, anxiety, depression, ADHD, ME, etc., are not considered as Extenuating Circumstances and instead are addressed using Reasonable Adjustments (the Code of Practice on Reasonable Adjustments for Students is available on the School of Mathematics webpage).

It is the responsibility of a student to report Extenuating Circumstances to the Extenuating Circumstances Officer. All requests for the consideration of Extenuating Circumstances must be accompanied by independent third party evidence such as a letter from a Doctor/Consultant or a Hospital certificate; a letter from a solicitor or counsellor; Death Certificate. Note that students are responsible for providing acceptable and sufficient evidence.

You must normally see the Extenuating Circumstances Officer in person. He/she will ask you to fill out an Extenuating Circumstances Form. These forms are only available from the Extenuating Circumstances Officer. In exceptional circumstances, for example, you are hospitalized, someone may contact the Extenuating Circumstances Officer on your behalf. Or, you may do so yourself by email or phone.

EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES AND CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

Extenuating Circumstances may affect your ability to submit continuous assessment. How these are dealt with varies from module to module.

If your Extenuating Circumstances affect a module which is not taught by the School of Mathematics, the Extenuating Circumstances procedures of the module-teaching School will apply. You should report your Extenuating Circumstances to both the School of Mathematics and to the module-teaching School. The Extenuating Circumstances Officers from both Schools will then agree upon the necessary actions to deal with the Extenuating Circumstances (for example, an extended assessment deadline, an extra assessment opportunity, etc.).

If your Extenuating Circumstances affect a module taught by the School of Mathematics where there are several pieces of continuous assessment then a “best out of” procedure may be used. Here is a typical example: In a 20 credit module with 8 equally weighted assignments across the Autumn and Spring terms, the final continuous assessment mark is calculated based upon the best 6 out of 8 assignments. If you fail to submit one or two assignments, then you need take no action. If you fail to submit more than two assignments then you should see the Extenuating Circumstances Officer at the earliest opportunity. At the end of the year, the Extenuating Circumstances Officer and your Year Director will consider your case. If appropriate, it may be possible to make an adjustment to the way your module mark is calculated. Documentary evidence must be provided.

If you have completed less than 50% of the available continuous assessment, then even with Extenuating Circumstances, it would not normally be possible to award full marks for the continuous assessment component of a module.

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For modules which have project-based continuous assessment or which require the production of a dissertation, it is possible to seek an extension to submission deadlines due to Extenuating Circumstances. In such cases you will be required to see the Extenuating Circumstances Officer to discuss your situation and the possibility of being granted an extension. Documentary evidence will be required. Minor computer problems and/or inadequate planning are not considered Extenuating Circumstances.

It is the responsibility of each module lecturer to inform students at the beginning of the academic year of the exact assessment arrangements for his/her module and how Extenuating Circumstances are to be dealt with. It is the responsibility of each student to be aware of the arrangements for each of his/her modules, to keep track of missed pieces of continuous assessment and to see the Extenuating Circumstances Officer as appropriate.

EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES AND EXAMINATIONS

Extenuating Circumstances may also affect your ability to sit an examination. In such cases you may request a deferral of your examination. All deferral requests must be made **BEFORE** the commencement of the affected examination. If you do not request a deferral, or if your deferral is not granted, the mark you achieve on your examination will stand (with a mark of 0 recorded for any exams which you do not attend). Students can request a deferral of their examination up until the scheduled start time of the examination. The request to defer an examination should be made in person to the Extenuating Circumstances Officer at the earliest possible opportunity. If there is insufficient time to submit your request to the Extenuating Circumstances Officer, you may submit your request to the Examinations Office. All requests for deferral of Examinations must be accompanied by documentary evidence. If you do not have documentary evidence your request for deferral can be provisionally granted, however, you must provide satisfactory evidence within 5 working days after the date of your examination. Failure to provide satisfactory evidence will result in a mark of 0 being awarded for the provisionally deferred examination.

A request for the deferral of an examination will only be granted in exceptional cases. For example, the death of a close relative in the Autumn term is unlikely to be deemed sufficient to grant a deferral, however, the death of a close relative immediately before, or during, the examination period may be deemed sufficient. Each request for deferral will be considered on an individual basis. If a request is granted, the examination will be deferred to the next appropriate opportunity. The next opportunity to take an examination deferred from the main examination period will be during the subsequent supplementary examination period. The next opportunity to take an examination deferred during the supplementary examination period will be during the main examination period of the following academic session. Note that progression decisions and final degree classifications may only be possible after the deferred examination is sat. Note also that if a re-sit examination is deferred, the mark of the deferred examination will still be capped at the Pass level.

Students with a short term, time limited condition affecting the ability to sit an examination may request Alternative Arrangements for the examination(s) affected. Alternative Arrangements will be made in only the most exceptional of circumstances. The threshold for granting Alternative Arrangements will significantly exceed that of deferring an examination.

The above procedures outline how Extenuating Circumstances will be dealt with for examinations during the examination period. In particular, this means that if you attend an examination, then your examination mark stands. In exceptional cases you may feel that the above procedures do not adequately deal with your Extenuating Circumstances (for example, sudden illness during an examination). In these cases you must see the Extenuating Circumstances Officer and you will be required to provide documentary evidence.

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The deadline for seeing the Extenuating Circumstances Officer will be announced before the commencement of the examination period. You **MUST NOT** delay seeing the Extenuating Circumstances Officer until after you have your results.

Your case will then be considered by the Extenuating Circumstances Panel. Your case will be treated in a confidential manner, and only the outcome of the Extenuating Circumstances Panel will be revealed to the Board of Examiners.