

EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Introduction

- 1 In this document 'we', 'our' and 'us' refer to Sheffield Hallam University. 'You' and 'your' refer to all taught students of Sheffield Hallam University who are studying for a Sheffield Hallam academic award either at the University or a partner organisation.
- 2 We aim to provide all of our students with the support and guidance they need to successfully complete their course. The Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure sets out the support options that are available if you experience sudden, severe and unexpected health or personal issues whilst studying with us.
- 3 The Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure does not deal with long-term medical conditions that might necessitate adjustments to assessment. The way we support students with long term conditions is set out in the [Assessment Support for Students with Learning Contracts](#) document.

Overview

- 4 Provided you meet the rules for progression to each level of study, you should generally expect to study in consecutive years, until you reach the end of the course. You should ensure you are aware of the assessment requirements for each module you study, in order that you can submit coursework on time, and attend other assessment events such as presentations and examinations. Generally it is in your best interests to take assessment at the scheduled time, close to the delivery of teaching, and to complete your course within the normal duration.
- 5 Whilst studying with us you may encounter some of the difficulties of life experienced by most people, such as ill-health or difficult personal issues. Normally you will be able to overcome or manage these without any impact on your ability to attend teaching and take assessment.
- 6 Extenuating circumstances are medical or personal issues that you cannot overcome or manage without an impact on your ability to attend teaching and take assessment because they occur suddenly, unexpectedly and are severe in nature. There is no definitive list of situations that meet this definition and we recognise that difficulties impact on people in different ways. However we have provided an indicative list of the type of situation that generally meet the definition, together with those that do not, in Annex 1 to this document.
- 7 You must let us know as soon as possible if you think your studies are being affected by extenuating circumstances. You can do this by contacting your Student Support Adviser. The sooner you let us know, the more options there will be to support you. These options will become limited, or may not be available at all, if you wait until after an assessment period or until the end of an academic year before disclosing extenuating circumstances.
- 8 We understand you might not always feel comfortable in disclosing your circumstances, particularly when they are of a personal and sensitive nature. We do encourage you to do so and

anything you tell us will be treated in the strictest confidence and only disclosed to those who need to know in order to provide support (for example your Academic Adviser or Student Support Adviser).

- 9 The Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure contains three options to help you mitigate the impact of extenuating circumstances. These options are designed to help you manage assessment by delaying, deferring or postponing it. They do not remove the requirement to take assessment, or change the nature of that assessment but facilitate you completing it when you are in a better position to do so. The options are:
- An extension to a submission deadline (see sections 11-18)
 - A repeat of an assessment attempt (see sections 19-32)
 - A planned break in studies (see sections 33-40)

The appropriateness and availability of each option will very much depend on the timing and severity of your circumstances and when you disclose them.

- 10 We will consider any request made within the Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure sensitively, fairly and equitably based on the extent to which you have:
- Submitted the request in a timely manner.
 - Clearly stated the nature of your circumstances and the impact they are having on your ability to study and take assessment.
 - Provided appropriate documentary evidence where it can be reasonably obtained.

Extending a Submission Deadline

11 Note:

i) This option applies to coursework assessment tasks only. Other types of assessment such as examinations and phase tests are held on fixed dates and therefore an extension is not applicable. If your ability to attend a fixed assessment event is being affected by extenuating circumstances you will need to request a repeat of that assessment attempt (see sections 20-33).

ii) This option is not available if your reasons for an extension relate to a condition already covered by a learning contract which includes adjustments for extended submission deadlines. You should refer to the [Assessment Support for Students with Learning Contracts](#).

- 12 It is your responsibility to be aware of your assessment schedule and to manage your time to ensure that coursework is submitted by the published deadline. Missing a deadline will generally mean the work is not marked (although work submitted no later than one working day after the deadline will be marked, capped at the minimum module pass mark).
- 13 Extending a submission deadline may help you mitigate the impact of extenuating circumstances, however you need to be aware that this may mean you having to submit the work close to the deadline for another assessment, which may impact on your performance.
- 14 If you feel it is in your best interests to request an extension to a submission deadline then you should complete the online Request to Extend a Submission Deadline (RESD) via [My Student Record](#). The RESD should normally be submitted no later than 24 hours before the submission deadline for the assessment. Requests made after this time may not be considered. If you are struggling to complete the online request because of a particular condition, then please speak to your Student Support Adviser.

- 15 Extensions to submission deadlines are designed to help you mitigate the impact of short-term circumstances (for example a short illness) that occur close to a coursework submission deadline. The nature of these circumstances means it might not be possible to obtain medical evidence to corroborate the circumstances you are reporting. However, where we believe it is reasonable to expect evidence to be provided you will be asked to do so. In certain situations you can use the [self-certification procedure](#) to report short periods of illness that are preventing submission of coursework by the deadline.
- 16 Extensions are intended to allow you to complete coursework, not to start it. Therefore you are required to demonstrate you have made such progress that it is reasonable to assume you would have completed on time had it not been for the circumstances reported.
- 17 If your request is accepted you will be given an extended submission deadline of:
- normally five working days,
 - exceptionally 10 working days, or
 - up to a maximum of 20 working days for dissertations or other large projects (so long as it is possible to mark and moderate the work before the assessment board deadline).

Note: we define working days as all days other than weekends, public holidays and University closure periods.

- 18 It will be your responsibility to meet the new deadline. If you feel your extenuating circumstances are preventing this you should speak to your Student Support Adviser for advice about available options.

Repeating an Assessment Attempt

- 19 Note:
- i) This option is available for any assessment task affected by extenuating circumstances, i.e. coursework, examinations, presentations.
 - ii) This option is not available if your reasons for a repeat attempt relate to a condition already supported by a learning contract which includes adjustments for extended submission deadlines. You should refer to the [Assessment Support for Students with Learning Contracts](#).
- 20 Registration on a module entitles you to an initial attempt at each assessment task in that module, and one referral attempt if required. Repeating an assessment attempt means the attempt affected by extenuating circumstances is restored. Therefore:
- If the initial attempt is affected by extenuating circumstances then you will repeat this attempt at a later date, as if for the first time.
 - If the referral attempt is affected by extenuating circumstances you will take this attempt at a later date, with the mark still capped at the minimum module pass mark.
- 21 Repeating an assessment attempt may help you mitigate the impact of extenuating circumstances, however there are implications you will need to consider:
- Generally, the best time to attempt assessment is at the point it is initially set, within the delivery of the module, alongside the rest of your student cohort, and where the assessment forms part of a structured assessment schedule.

- The repeat will normally take place in the published reassessment period for your course. This could mean you having to return to the University over the summer to complete work or sit an examination.
 - The repeat may involve you having to complete a different assignment to the one set for the initial or referral attempt, and will always involve a different examination.
 - If you repeat attempts in several assessment tasks then it could lead to you having to manage a large workload within a short period of time.
 - Failure to successfully complete all assessment tasks by the end of an academic year could prevent you progressing to the next level of study in the following year. This would extend the time taken to complete your course.
- 22 If you feel it is your best interests to request to repeat the assessment attempt, you should complete the online Request to Repeat an Assessment Attempt (RRAA) via [My Student Record](#). It is important that we hear from you directly about how your circumstances have affected you. Therefore we do not allow RRAAs to be submitted by third parties (for example a parent or a friend). If you are struggling to complete the online request because of a particular condition, then please speak to your Student Support Adviser.
- 23 The RRAA should be submitted within 5 working days from the date of the assessment task affected by extenuating circumstances. This means:
- 5 working days from the submission deadline for a coursework task.
 - 5 working days from the date of an examination or other fixed assessment event.
- 24 A RRAA received after the 5 working days deadline will not normally be considered unless you can demonstrate you were incapable of meeting the deadline. You will need to explain your reasons for late submission on the RRAA and give evidence of your reasons where appropriate.
- 25 The RRAA must include:
- A clear and concise explanation of your circumstances and the impact they have had on your performance in the assessment.
 - Details of whether you have previously reported your circumstances to a member of staff.
 - Relevant independent documentary evidence to support your claim where it can be provided. Please see the [evidence to support a RRAA](#) guidance.
- Note: in certain situations you can use the [self-certification procedure](#) to evidence absence from an examination or other time-constrained assessment activity.
- 26 We appreciate that the information you disclose to us will often be of a personal, private and sensitive nature. We assure you that it will be securely stored and only seen by those members of staff responsible for processing and considering your request. If you have concerns about disclosing information because you believe it to be exceptionally sensitive in nature you must raise those concerns with your Student Support Adviser.
- 27 Your RRAA will be considered by an Extenuating Circumstances Panel (ECP). ECPs are chaired by senior managers from Academic Services, and its membership includes representatives from Student Support Services and the Students' Union. The ECP's quorum is three members. The ECP will consider your RRAA on the basis of the information you provide on the RRAA form, the evidence you provide to support those circumstances, and any statements you request from your Student Support Adviser and/or Disabled Student Support. The ECP will send you its decision via an e-mail to your student e-mail account.

28 If the ECP accepts your RRAA you will be allowed to repeat the particular assessment task or tasks if you have not achieved the minimum overall pass criteria in the module concerned.

It is important to note: if you have passed a module then you will not be allowed to repeat any task on that module.

You will find out if you can repeat an attempt at an assessment task when you receive your results on My Student Record. Please check the Virtual Helpdesk on My Hallam for details of when results will be issued and the requirements for resubmission.

29 If the circumstances reported on the RRAA continue to persist, we expect you to take reasonable steps to access support to help you to mitigate the impact. We will not necessarily accept further RRAs submitted for the same circumstances unless you give a valid reason as to why it has not yet been possible to arrange additional support.

30 Exceptionally, you may be offered the chance to repeat the whole of the academic year or semester that has been affected by extenuating circumstances. This is known as a 'deferral with attendance'. A deferral with attendance will only be recommended by the ECP where you have missed such a proportion of teaching that you would be unable to repeat any assessment attempt without first attending teaching. Marks for assessment would be uncapped. Decisions on whether to offer deferral with attendance are made within your Faculty based on recommendations from the ECP. This is a discretionary procedure and you cannot request a deferral with attendance.

31 If the ECP declines your RRAA, it will be for one or more of the following reasons:

- It has been submitted late without valid reason.
- There is insufficient evidence to support the circumstances reported.
- There is no link between the timing of the circumstances reported and the timing of the assessment.
- The circumstances could have been avoided or the impact limited.
- Reasonable action has already been taken to mitigate the impact of the circumstances.

32 You will receive an e-mail from the ECP with an explanation for the decision to decline. You should read the [Appeals Policy and Procedure](#) for information about the grounds on which you may appeal this decision. You are advised to do this as soon as possible as the deadline for submitting an appeal is 10 working days from the date on which we send you the decision.

Planned Break in Studies

33 Note:

i) This option is not linked to any particular assessment task and is generally available for any level of study.

ii) This option applies for extenuating circumstances reasons only. However, there are opportunities to request time away from your studies for non-extenuating circumstances reasons. The scenarios in which requests might be approved are set out on the [Taking a Break from Study form](#).

iii) If you are pregnant and are planning maternity to take maternity leave you should raise this with your Student Support Adviser in good time to arrange your studies around this leave.

- 34 Taking a planned break in study may help you mitigate the impact of extenuating circumstances, however there are implications you will need to consider:
- A break could affect matters such as student loans, bursaries, grants, sponsorship and tuition fees. You should seek advice and clarification where applicable from external bodies such as Student Finance England and your local education authority.
 - Other contractual arrangements, for example those you make for accommodation, may remain in place regardless of your status of your studies. You may need to discuss with your accommodation provider whether you can be released from this contract.
 - You will be extending the duration of your course beyond the normal duration. This will mean you studying with a different cohort of students when you resume.
- 35 If you are an international student attending on a Tier 4 student visa, you must ensure that you understand the implications of a break in study on your visa. The University must report your break in study to UK Visas and Immigration and you will need to apply for a new visa to return to study. You must ensure you are aware of the Tier 4 Time Limits on study in the UK. Also if you are requesting a break in study of more than two years, you may be required to provide a new IELTS English Language certificate before the University can provide a further CAS. Further advice on the implications of a break in study is available from the International Experience Team.
- 36 You can request a planned break in studies if extenuating circumstances are preventing sustained meaningful engagement with those studies. By sustained meaningful engagement we mean absence from teaching for at least four successive weeks. To make a request you must complete the [Taking a Break from Study form](#) in conjunction with your Student Support Adviser. The request will be considered by a member of Student Support Services and Course Leader on the basis of the information and evidence you provide about the nature of your circumstances. If your request is agreed you will be invited to a meeting to discuss your current academic profile, including which assessment tasks have been completed and which remain outstanding and the date on which you will resume your studies.
- 37 If your request is accepted your studies will be put on hold until the next academic year (or next available intake, where appropriate). The specific implications of the break will vary according to the nature of your course and will be discussed with you before you take the break. However, the following principles will generally apply:
- You will not attend any teaching or attempt any assessment for the duration of the break.
 - Any assessment already submitted or exams already taken will be marked and considered at a Departmental Assessment Board.
 - If modules are passed, the marks stand.
 - If modules are not passed, you can choose to retain individual task marks, or to void them.
 - We will void individual task marks if the module being delivered in the next academic year is not available or has been modified.
- 38 It is expected that you will resume your studies on the date stated on the [Taking a Break in Study form](#). You will be contacted by your Student Support Adviser at least two months prior to your expected date of return. If you do not re-enrol on the expected date of return, it will be assumed that you do not wish to continue your study with the University and you will be withdrawn from your course. In exceptional circumstances, you may be allowed to extend your break in studies for one additional year if there is evidence to demonstrate you are not able to return. You must contact your Student Support Adviser by the date specified on the [Taking a Break in Study form](#) to discuss this.

39 We will always look to support your request wherever possible. There are some situations however where it will not be approved. These include:

- Where you make the request within the final four weeks of teaching in the academic year, or after teaching has finished.
- Where the circumstances reported do not meet our definition of extenuating circumstances, or where you have not provided any evidence to support the circumstances reported.
- Where a break in study would take you beyond the maximum duration for your course.
- Where your course is about to close or be substantially redesigned, meaning that the current provision will not be available when you return.
- Where you are in debt to the University regarding tuition fees.

40 If your request is declined we will explain the reasons why and discuss with you other options for support, for example submitting a RRAA for the assessments affected by extenuating circumstances.

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	Clarifications to Annex 1:- Point 5 - addition of "normally" to allow discretion to exceptionally consider extension requests up to the deadline Point 8 - clarification regarding length of time for extension for Dissertation/large project	June 2016	AQSEC (AQSEC 4/1/6/13)
	Incorporation of support options previously in annexes into the body of the policy. Explicit reference to the Assessment Support for Students with Learning Contracts. Revision to principles relating to planned break in study. Inclusion of examples of extenuating circumstances (Annex 1).	July 2017	Assistant Registrar: Assessment, Awards and Regulations (AAR)
	Revision to paragraph 14 - change to online submission of requests to extend deadlines.	September 2017	Assistant Registrar: AAR
	Staff role titles updated	January 2019	Student Policy and Compliance Senior Manager

ANNEX 1

Examples of extenuating circumstances

The list below gives examples of the type of situation that would meet the definition of extenuating circumstances. These are illustrative and should not be read as exhaustive.

Medical

- Emergency hospital admission/scheduled treatment (e.g. an operation)
- Serious accident or injury
- Worsening of an on-going condition
- Illness
- Impact of prescribed medication
- Symptoms of an illness or condition awaiting diagnosis

Minor ailments, such as a cold, and routine medical appointments will not normally be considered as extenuating circumstances, because the impact can be overcome or managed.

Personal

- Bereavement of a family member, dependent or friend
- On-going impact from bereavement
- Illness, accident or injury to a family member, dependent or friend
- Impact of a criminal act against you or your property
- Impact of natural disaster
- Participation at national or international sporting or cultural events
- Work commitments (part-time students only)

There are other types of personal situations that do not meet our definition of extenuating circumstances because we believe they can be avoided or that you can be reasonably expected to manage the impact. These include:

- The break-up of a short-term relationship
- Financial difficulties
- Attending or taking part in sporting and cultural events other than those referred to above
- Holidays or travel
- Normal domestic issues, such as moving house
- Voluntary work
- Weddings
- Work commitments for full-time students

In addition, we do not accept study related issues as extenuating circumstances, for example:

- Not giving yourself sufficient time to complete coursework and missing the submission deadline
- Losing coursework
- Failure to read your examination timetable
- Refusal to return for assessments scheduled for the reassessment period
- Withdrawal of IT facilities as a result of being in debt to the University
- Circumstances that affect another individual in relation to group work
- English being your second language
- Transport difficulties that could easily have been avoided
- IT difficulties