

SECTION F — EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

We expect you to manage and take responsibility for your learning on a day-to-day basis at the University, but we also understand that there may be times when events outside your control have a negative impact on your work. Our extenuating circumstances process is the way we enable students to tell us formally about serious issues which they believe have affected their academic performance.

This section explains how we define and review extenuating circumstances, and the possible outcomes if we agree that your circumstances have affected your work.

The Academic Support Office in the Academic Registry manages the extenuating circumstances process for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students and can offer advice if you are thinking of making a claim: email aso@norwichuni.ac.uk for more information.

If you are a research degree student and you have any individual circumstances you want to report to us, please talk to staff in the Research Office at the University first of all: email research@norwichuni.ac.uk.

- **If you think you have extenuating circumstances, you must submit a claim at <https://our.norwichuni.ac.uk> to report them to us with supporting evidence and the details of the impact of the circumstances on your work** – it's not enough just to tell a member of University staff about your circumstances. [Click here for a link to the form](#), or search the website for 'Extenuating Circumstances'.
- **You can only claim for extenuating circumstances in your current academic year** – you can't claim for them for previous years.
- If we uphold your extenuating circumstances – in other words, if we agree that your circumstances have had an impact on your work – **we won't give you extra marks for your assessment or an unfair advantage over other students**. Extenuating circumstances claims which we uphold give the assessment boards a number of ways to take your circumstances into account when they are considering your academic progress. This section explains these outcomes in detail.
- **It's fine to make more than one extenuating circumstances claim** during your time at the University if you need to tell us that your circumstances have changed, **but we may take into account any previous claims you have made** when we're looking at your application.
- We don't accept extenuating circumstances as a reason for **any type of academic misconduct**, including plagiarism. See **section M** for more about how we deal with these matters through our disciplinary procedures.
- For more information about **how we keep extenuating circumstances claims in the long-term**, please see **section N**.

1 What are extenuating circumstances?

1.1 The University defines extenuating circumstances as circumstances which meet all of the following criteria:

- they are exceptional – in other words, you couldn't possibly have planned for them;
- they are or were outside your control;
- they took place while or shortly before you were completing work for a specific assessment at the University; and
- they prevented you from completing this work to the standard expected.

If you have experienced other issues which have affected your work but do not meet all these criteria – and therefore which aren't extenuating circumstances – please speak to a member of staff on your course or in Student Support as soon as you can.

[Click here for more about Student Support](#). You can contact them by going to a Drop-in session during term-time, sending them a message through <https://our.norwichuni.ac.uk>, or by emailing support@norwichuni.ac.uk.

2 General information about extenuating circumstances, including when to make a claim and examples of supporting evidence

2.1 If you decide to make a claim for extenuating circumstances, **you must provide supporting evidence and the details of the impact of the circumstances on your work – we won't look at any incomplete claims**. The evidence you provide:

- **can be anything which directly supports what you have told us about your circumstances**, such as a letter from a GP or other medical practitioner, a statement from a counsellor, a crime reference number, or a death certificate; and
- **must be from an independent or third-party source**. The exception to this is evidence from one of the University's dyslexia support tutors, specialist mentors, or mental health support staff, which we will accept in support of a claim.

Please remember:

- it's your responsibility to obtain evidence for your extenuating circumstances claim – staff at the University won't do this for you. This also means that if there is a charge to obtain the evidence, for example for a doctor's note, you will need to pay for it;

- don't provide personal evidence about a third party as part of your evidence unless you have their permission to give this to us. We can give you advice on this when you make your claim; and
- we'll check the details of any evidence you send us. If we believe that you have made a dishonest claim, we may take action using our disciplinary procedures.

See section M for more about our disciplinary procedures.

2.2 We publish final deadlines in the academic year by which undergraduate and postgraduate taught students must make their claims for extenuating circumstances, if they wish to do so. But we also encourage students to make claims to us as soon as they are able to because:

- if we are able to offer you help in light of the circumstances you have reported to us, it gives us the opportunity to do so at the time you might need our support most; and
- it means we can provide up-to-date information to the formal assessment and other boards which make decisions about your academic progress.

You can make a claim for extenuating circumstances at any point during the year before the final published deadline, but our advice is: **try and make your claim as close as possible to the point the circumstances have affected you.**

[Click here for a link to the deadlines for extenuating circumstances claims in the current year](#), or search the website for 'Extenuating Circumstances'.

2.3 If the University is aware of exceptional circumstances which might affect the academic performance of all or a group of students, such as a fire on University premises or travel disruption caused by very serious weather conditions, senior managers at the University will make a decision as appropriate as to how to address the issue so that no student is disadvantaged. For example, we could agree to extend a published deadline for one or more units. In these cases, individual students wouldn't need to make their own claims to report these extenuating circumstances. Instead, the Academic Registry or Course Administration will contact any students affected about how we plan to manage the situation.

In the next two sections below, you can find examples of the types of extenuating circumstances often presented to the University.

The first section lists extenuating circumstances we may uphold – but please note that this list is for general guidance only; you will need to make your own case to us in your claim about your extenuating circumstances and how they have affected you, as well as providing appropriate supporting evidence.

The second section lists examples of extenuating circumstances we are unlikely to uphold, but please note that the list is not exhaustive.

3 Examples of extenuating circumstances we may uphold

- 3.1 Bereavement: the death of a close relative, significant other or friend, which in an employment context would have led to you being granted compassionate leave.
- 3.2 A serious physical injury, or a physical or mental health condition. See the next page for more information about how we might consider a claim for long-term health conditions or disabilities.
- 3.3 Witnessing or being the victim of a serious crime, such as a physical or sexual assault.
- 3.4 Family breakdown: divorce or separation of you and your partner, your parents or guardians.
- 3.5 Responsibilities as a carer, for example for a parent or child, which are unexpected or which have become more demanding in terms of their time and impact on you.
- 3.6 Financial problems if we think these are outside your control, such as a problem with your bank or with your tuition fee loan provider.
- 3.7 Official commitments such as jury service or a court appearance, where you have no control over the date and time.
- 3.8 If you have employment commitments: exceptional pressures of work or a change in your employment circumstances.

4 Examples of extenuating circumstances we are unlikely to uphold

If your circumstances affect for you a short period of time and/or they fall into the categories outlined below, you can choose to submit your work for a unit in line with the late submission policy. See section D for more information.

- 4.1 Short periods of illness or minor injuries where you experienced the effects for up to 5 working days (one week).
- 4.2 Personal 'life events' which may be difficult but which we would expect you to be able to manage. This includes domestic, work, financial or other problems which are less serious than the ones listed in the section immediately above.

- 4.3 Any circumstances which relate to periods of time outside your studies – for example, before you became a student at the University – unless you can demonstrate that these circumstances have directly affected your work in a way which is exceptional and unexpected.
- 4.4 Long-term health conditions or disabilities which you normally manage and/or for which you are already receiving support, including dyslexia. We would only look at upholding a claim for you in these circumstances if:
- you have a significant change in your condition or diagnosis; or
 - you have a new or recent diagnosis; or
 - the nature of your condition means that your symptoms can become significantly worse at very short notice.
- 4.5 Submitting your work beyond the time-limits we specify in the late submission policy, or not submitting your work at all, for any of the following reasons:
- **because of poor study practice.** By poor study practice we mean, for example, managing your time badly, or not being aware of University regulations or deadlines; or
 - **because of technical problems which we would expect you to manage,** such as losing your work because you haven't backed it up properly, or at all; or problems with a Wi-Fi connection or a computer, which you could have addressed by using University facilities on-campus;
 - **because of transport problems,** unless these are exceptional and unavoidable – for example, you couldn't have caught an earlier bus or train on the day you were due to hand in your work, and you can confirm this with independent evidence; or
 - **because you have to produce work for more than one unit at a time.**

See section D for more about the late submission policy.

- 4.6 Absence from your course where you are attending appointments or events which you could reasonably reorganise or choose not to take part in: for example, holidays or family celebrations.
- 4.7 Telling us about your extenuating circumstances after the final deadline for the academic year has passed, for example because you weren't comfortable about bringing them to the University's attention or because you were trying to avoid the issue – unless you can provide exceptional reasons for this. Exceptional reasons for not submitting a claim on time could include being hospitalised, or because you experienced a bereavement around the time of the deadline.

5 How do we assess a claim for extenuating circumstances?

- 5.1 If you make a claim for extenuating circumstances, the Academic Support Office will:

- record the details;
- store your claim and supporting evidence securely;
- check that the claim is complete and that you have provided independent supporting evidence;
- email you to acknowledge we have received your claim; and
- contact you if any part of your claim appears to be missing or is unclear.

5.2 The Academic Support Office may also contact your Course Leader (or equivalent), Year Tutor or the Year 0 Pathways Leader for more information if it might be helpful in assessing your claim. Where it does this, the Academic Support Office will not share the details of your claim with members of academic staff.

5.3 Acting on behalf of the Academic Registrar, the Academic Support Office makes decisions on individual claims wherever possible, and usually within 10 working days (two weeks) of receiving a complete claim.

5.4 We may also make decisions on extenuating circumstances claims at review meetings. The Academic Registrar (or a nominee) chairs these meetings, which are attended by the Assistant Registrar for Academic Support and a Senior Academic Support Officer.

5.5 The staff present at review meetings have access to a copy of these *Student Regulations and Procedures* and access to:

- your claim and the evidence you have sent in;
- any comments we have received from your course area; and
- a summary of your marks to date (assuming you have been a student at the University for at least one unit).

5.6 All staff considering extenuating circumstances claims will take into account the following:

- on the basis of the information and evidence available, how severe the circumstances appear to be;
- the timing of the circumstances reported – for example, how close the student was to an assessment deadline when the circumstances affected them;
- whether support is already in place for the student because of their extenuating circumstances, and if so, how much this might have helped the student. For example, you may have submitted work for a unit in line with the late submission policy; and
- whether you have previously claimed for extenuating circumstances.

See section D for more about the late submission policy.

5.7 After we have considered your extenuating circumstances claim, the Academic Support Office will write to tell you whether or not we have upheld your claim. If

we uphold your claim, it means that we agree that the circumstances you have reported to us are likely to have had or will have an impact on the work you are completing. If we decide not to uphold your claim, we will explain our decision to you.

- 5.8 All decisions about extenuating circumstances claims are final. This means that you can't make an appeal directly against our decision on your extenuating circumstances claim.

However, as part of our formal appeals process, extenuating circumstances are one of the grounds on which you can make an appeal to us – either because you haven't claimed for them before, or because you have new evidence not available previously. If you make an appeal on any of the grounds available, you can also ask us to take into account any decision we have previously made on your extenuating circumstances claim.

See section J for more about the decisions you can appeal against at the University, and the grounds you could make an appeal on.

- 5.9 You can also submit one or more additional extenuating circumstances claims if your circumstances continue to affect you beyond the period you initially made a claim for.

6 How we make assessment decisions after we have upheld extenuating circumstances claims

- 6.1 For all extenuating circumstances we uphold, the Academic Support Office provides the following information to the relevant assessment board about:
- the period of time affected by the student's extenuating circumstances;
 - the unit or units affected; and
 - a decision about the severity of the student's extenuating circumstances, given any support already in place.

7 The possible outcomes if we uphold your extenuating circumstances claim

If we have upheld your extenuating circumstances claim, we can make a number of different decisions about your academic progress. These are listed individually below. Where an assessment board confirms that you have passed a unit, your mark will be available on e:Vision. If you are given the opportunity to submit work to us as a consequence of your upheld extenuating circumstances, a Course Administrator will write to you after the Assessment Board has met to confirm the new date by which you need to hand in your work.

Please note too that an upheld extenuating circumstances claim does not automatically mean that an assessment board will allow you to continue with your studies.

- 7.1 We can give you the opportunity to resubmit work for a unit where you have previously received a Fail or Marginal Fail for that unit.
- 7.2 Where you have submitted work for a unit in line with the late submission policy, we will remove any marks deduction we have applied.

See section D for more about the late submission policy.

- 7.3 We can give you one final opportunity to submit work for a unit, even if we have previously told you that your most recent submission for the unit would be your final attempt.
- 7.4 We can give you the opportunity to repeat a period of study on your course to retrieve a failed unit or units. We might ask you to repeat a unit if we believed that it would be too difficult for you just to complete a resubmission task – for example, because of your extenuating circumstances, and/or because of the amount of work you would need to do.
- 7.5 In exceptional cases, we could also:
- accept and assess work which you have submitted beyond the deadline specified; or
 - give you extra time to complete work for referrals or resubmissions.

See section D for more about the late submission policy.

See section E for more about upheld extenuating circumstances claims as they relate to referral and resubmission.

8 How we make decisions on final degree awards where we have upheld extenuating circumstances claims

- 8.1 In certain cases, we take into account upheld extenuating circumstances when we are making a final degree award to a student for their course.
- 8.2 For undergraduate courses, the Final Award Board can make a discretionary upgrade to a higher degree classification if students meet specific criteria for both their extenuating circumstances and their final award mark.

See section H for more about discretionary upgrades to degree classifications.