

Extenuating Circumstances Policy

1. Introduction and values

- 1.1. The mission of Queen Mary University of London is ‘to create a truly inclusive environment, building on our cherished cultural diversity, where students and staff flourish, reach their full potential and are proud to be part of the University’. Support for students is integral in enabling them to achieve. This policy sets out the responsibilities of students and staff in relation to the extenuating circumstances (ECs) process.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. Where a student may have circumstances that are impacting their ability to undertake or complete any assessment, they can inform the University if they think that these circumstances will cast doubt on the validity of the assessment as a measure of their achievement. The Extenuating Circumstances Policy provides a transparent framework enabling consistent advice and guidance. Guidance for students is available on the [Student Wellbeing Hub](#).

3. Definitions

- 3.1. **Assessment** refers to summative assessment, i.e. where marks contribute in whole or in part to the module mark. This is any form of assessment including both coursework and examinations.
- 3.2. **Carer** refers to anyone, including children or adults, who provides unpaid help and support to another person who could not manage without their help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction. The care they give is unpaid. Care may be provided on a daily basis or may fluctuate depending on the person’s condition or circumstances.

- 3.3. **Coursework** includes but is not limited to essays, reports, presentations, poster presentations, seminar/tutorial work, laboratory/field work, in-class or in-semester tests, project proposals, gobbet exercises and homework sheets.
- 3.4. **Disability** – Someone is disabled under the [Equality Act 2010](#) if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on their ability to do normal day to day activities. ‘Long-term’ typically means more than 12 months.
- 3.5. **Discounting** refers to the discounting of an assessed element from the calculation of the module mark. This is only permitted where the missed element is worth 20% or less of the module and all the required learning outcomes can be met. It will normally only be used where it is impractical for a rearranged assessment or replacement attempt to take place.
- 3.6. **Examinations/Examination period** refers to the centrally timetabled examinations. Details can be found in the [Queen Mary Calendar](#). Where programmes have examinations that are externally scheduled or scheduled outside the main examination periods, details can be found in the [Student Handbook](#).
- 3.7. **Extenuating circumstances** see ‘what are extenuating circumstances’ (Section 7).
- 3.8. **Extenuating Circumstances Assessor/EC Assessor** refers to the member/s of staff nominated to assess claims and publish outcomes.
- 3.9. **Fit to sit** means that in submitting an assignment or sitting an exam, a student is declaring themselves fit to do so. Being ‘fit’ generally means that a student is feeling well and functioning effectively. Therefore, if a student is debilitated because of significant medical or personal difficulties, they should not sit an exam or submit an assignment.
- 3.10. **Good reason** refers to circumstances beyond a student’s control and sufficiently impactful that a student would be unable to make information known to the university. Personal embarrassment or unwillingness to disclose personal circumstances does not count as ‘good reason’ for the purposes of this policy.
- 3.11. **Learning outcomes** describe the skills and knowledge students should be able to

demonstrate. At a module level, learning outcomes should describe what is required to successfully pass the module

- 3.12. **Maximum duration of study** is the maximum time permitted for a student to complete their studies. Further details are available in the [Academic Regulations](#).
- 3.13. **Next opportunity** for examinations can only be in an examination period. This is either the Late Summer Resit Period (LSR) or - for exams where the first attempt takes place in the LSR - the end of the semester where the module was originally taught. This may delay progression or graduation.
- 3.14. **Standard claim** is an extenuating circumstances claim submitted with evidence.
- 3.15. **Self-certification claim** is an extenuating circumstances claim submitted without evidence.
- 3.16. **Written coursework** is an assignment where students produce a written piece, such as an essay, research paper, reflective piece or report.

4. Scope

- 4.1. The Extenuating Circumstances Policy applies to all students on taught modules at Queen Mary.
- 4.2. The Policy applies to all assessments taking place in the academic year. For modules and assessments that span more than one academic year, the iteration of the Policy from the academic year in which the student commenced their current developmental year shall apply.
- 4.3. This Policy is designed to:
 - a) Support students who identify extenuating circumstances which are negatively impacting on their assessments.
 - b) Outline how and when students should notify the University of circumstances which are affecting their assessments.

- c) Facilitate consistent decision making and provision of support.
- d) Protect the academic integrity of programmes. Assessments must measure evidenced achievement and are not designed to measure potential.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1. Students are responsible for:

- a) A commitment to their own learning, engaging with the resources, opportunities and advice available to support their success (see section 13).
- b) Managing their time to undertake learning activities and assignments. Having to work to multiple deadlines is not an extenuating circumstance.
- c) Familiarising themselves with the instructions for assessments, submitting the correct version of assignments on time and attending examinations at the appropriate times and venues.
- d) Flagging administrative or procedural errors when these are discovered (e.g. omissions from examination timetable).
- e) Familiarising themselves with this Policy and engaging with the procedures set out in this policy in good faith and with respect.

5.2. Extenuating Circumstances Assessors are responsible for:

- a) Familiarising themselves with the Extenuating Circumstances Policy and guidance.
- b) Making decisions in line with the Extenuating Circumstances Policy.
- c) Refer students to specialist services for support as appropriate e.g. to Advice and Counselling or Disability and Dyslexia Service.
- d) Escalating complex cases to the Extenuating Circumstances Oversight Panel.

5.3. The Module-Owning School/Institute is responsible for

- a) Providing guidance to students on the extenuating circumstances process.

- b) Assessing extenuating circumstances claims for their modules.
- c) Individual release of outcomes within the timeframes outlined.
- d) Informing the programme owning school/institute of the outcome.

5.4. The **Programme-owning School/Institute** is responsible for:

- a) Communicating the Policy to their learners in multiple ways (e.g. Student Handbooks, Module Tutor briefings, QMPlus, slides in learning sessions).
- b) Providing guidance to students on the extenuating circumstances process including information on deadlines.
- c) Providing support to students who need assistance with submitting a claim.
- d) Publishing claims for students on their programmes within the timeframes outlined.

5.5. The **Examination Boards** are responsible for:

- a) Agreeing module results and student progression.
- b) Approving extenuating circumstances outcomes that require academic judgement (e.g. discounting, and deferral of classification).
- c) Additional responsibilities of the Subject Examination Board (SEB) Chair are given in the [Assessment Handbook](#).

5.6. The **Director of Student Experience** (Student Experience Directorate) is responsible for:

- a) Oversight of this policy and its implementation.
- b) Communication of this policy to students and staff.
- c) Ensuring the provision of advice, training and resources that support the implementation.
- d) Convening an oversight panel to make consistent decisions on complex cases.

6. What are extenuating circumstances?

6.1. Extenuating circumstances are significant and unforeseen circumstances that are outside a student's control and which have a negative impact on a student's ability to undertake or complete any assessment so as to cast doubt the likely validity of the assessment as a measure of the student's achievement.

- a) **Beyond a student's control:** No intervention would have impacted on the circumstances, and they could not have been reasonably avoided.
- b) **Unforeseen:** Students could not predict what would happen. There was no prior knowledge or indication that the circumstance would occur.
- c) **Significant:** Not minor or trivial in nature. Circumstances such as the normal pressures of academic stress, paid employment, relationship issues, and financial difficulties are unlikely to be accepted.
- d) **Impact the validity of the assessment:** The circumstances must have had a significant impact on the ability to complete an assessment.

Circumstances not considered extenuating

6.2. The following are not considered extenuating circumstances, and a claim made solely on one or more of these grounds will be rejected. The list is illustrative, not exhaustive.

- a) Failure to submit or complete an assessment. Students should allow enough time to submit an assignment before the deadline.
- b) Arriving late for an examination or assessment.
- c) Misreading or not checking for updates to a timetable.
- d) Having multiple examinations or deadlines in close succession.
- e) Computer failure and/or loss of work. Students must back up electronic files regularly and securely.

- f) Technical issues with no independent proof of system failure on either QMplus or the University network. Issues such as browser compatibility or file size could reasonably be known in advance.
- g) Employment commitments including unpaid or voluntary work (students on a degree apprenticeship or distance learning programmes whose circumstances meet the definition of an extenuating circumstance may be able to claim for impacts caused by employment).
- h) Academic workload issues.
- i) Planned holidays or events, including activities with Queen Mary Students' Union. This includes time commitments related to hobbies and interests or the management of personal administration or legal matters.
- j) Submission of an incomplete or 'incorrect' version of an assessment.
- k) Observance of a religious festival or holy day. A student should plan their work to take into account participation in religious observances.
 - i. Coursework deadlines are set in advance, and if a deadline coincides with religious commitments then a student should be prepared to submit before the deadline.
 - ii. A student wishing to notify Queen Mary of religious reasons that may affect their ability to sit examinations on specific dates should complete the [religious holiday notification form](#) and submit it by the specified deadline (which will be well in advance of the examination date).
 - iii. If a timed coursework such as a test coincides with religious commitments a student should notify their school or institute as soon as possible and at least 14 calendar days before the scheduled assessment. The Director of Education, or their nominee, will assess if an adjustment to the assessment is possible.

Fit to sit

- 6.3. Queen Mary has adopted the 'fit to sit' principle. This means that if an assessment of any type is attempted or submitted then that attempt will be marked and counted as the student is deemed to be fit to sit or submit the assessment. Any subsequent claim for extenuating circumstances requesting an outcome that invalidates the submission (deferral, replacement or discounting) will only be considered where the student can evidence that they were not well enough to make an informed decision about their fitness to sit.
- 6.4. Where a student submits coursework after the due date, this will incur late penalties. If the reason the student did not submit the coursework on time is because they did not consider themselves 'fit to sit', they may submit an extenuating circumstances claim requesting that the late penalty be waived. These claims will be assessed in line with the definition of extenuating circumstances and the deadlines within this policy.

Illness and examinations

- 6.5. Where students are unwell on the day of an examination, or their preparation for their examination has been significantly impacted by circumstances which meet the definition of extenuating, they should not submit the examination. Instead, students should submit a claim for extenuating circumstances.
- 6.6. If a student is taken ill during an online examination and does not feel able to continue, they can submit an extenuating circumstance claim, but this will only be accepted where the examination is not submitted. Where the examination automatically submits, the student should report the onset of their illness and the impact on the assessment during the examination to the school/institute.
- 6.7. If a student is taken ill during an in-person examination and does not feel able to continue, they can submit an extenuating circumstance claim, but this will only be accepted where the onset of illness and its impact are reported to the invigilator.

7. Reporting extenuating circumstances

How to report extenuating circumstances

- 7.1. Students can apply for extenuating circumstances by using the online [MySIS](#) task (unless an alternative application process is outlined in the [Student Handbook](#)). (See the User Guidance on MySIS: Extenuating Circumstances for guidance on the task).
- 7.2. Students must provide enough information in the summary statement for their claim to be assessed.
- 7.3. Students can submit a standard claim with evidence or a self-certification claim. A self-certified application cannot be submitted more than once for the same assessment. If a further claim to the same assessment is required, a standard claim with supporting evidence must be submitted.

When to claim

- 7.4. Claims should be made as soon as possible and no later than the following cut-off dates:
 - a) 7 calendar days after the indicated deadline for coursework assessment.
 - b) 7 calendar days after submission of written coursework that has been submitted up to 7 calendar days after the indicated deadline. A standard claim can be considered on written coursework where the evidence supports circumstances that have an impact of longer than 7 calendar days, where the written coursework has been submitted up to 14 calendar days after the indicated deadline (providing this date does not exceed the mark return date).
 - c) Three calendar days after the last day of the Examination Period for exams.
- 7.5. Students waiting for evidence should submit a claim within the timeframes above and choose the option 'upload evidence at a later date'. Evidence must then be uploaded within 7 calendar days of the form submission otherwise the claim will be automatically deleted from the system.

- 7.6. Claims submitted after the extenuating circumstances cut-off date (8.4), or where evidence has not been uploaded by the evidence submission cut-off date, will be declined unless the student provides a good reason why this deadline was not met.
- 7.7. If there was 'good reason' why claims or evidence could not have been submitted by the cut-off dates, details must be included in the summary and claims must be accompanied by relevant evidence. For example, students who have been in hospital should provide a hospital admission certificate or discharge note.
- 7.8. The last date late claims will be considered will be published in the [Queen Mary Calendar](#). Where a student has good reason why the circumstances could not have been made known before this deadline, they can submit an appeal accompanied by relevant independent evidence, as outlined in section 11.

8. Evidence

- 8.1. Outside the provision of self-certification, a standard claim for extenuating circumstances must be accompanied by appropriate documentary evidence, such as medical certificates, death certificates, or police reports.
- 8.2. Whether students submit a self-certification or standard claim, additional evidence can still be requested in order to assess a claim.
- 8.3. Evidence must be in English or translated by an accredited translator.
- 8.4. Where courses accredited by a professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB) or delivered outside the UK have specific requirements for evidence, either the need for or the standard of evidence, this may over-rule evidence requirements 9.1-9.3. Where this applies details will be given in the [Student Handbook](#).

Standard of evidence

- 8.5. Evidence should be written by an appropriately qualified professional. Appointment letters or screenshots of health care appointments may be considered where they contain sufficient detail to confirm the information outlined in the claim. Photographs of injuries,

car accidents etc cannot be accepted. A police crime number on its own is unlikely to be accepted.

Self-certification

- 8.6. The provision of self-certification for extenuating circumstances recognises that students may have difficulty in obtaining evidence for some personal circumstances. In the case of medical extenuating circumstances for minor illnesses, students may not need, or be able to seek, medical attention and therefore will be unable to provide supporting evidence.
- 8.7. Students may self-certify up to 2 separate incidents of extenuating circumstances per academic year. Each self-certified claim can cover a period of up to 7 calendar days. Self-certification claims cannot be used sequentially to cover a period of longer than 7 calendar days.
- 8.8. Where students are not able to secure evidence of their circumstances, they may submit a third self-certification claim in each academic year. This claim should be submitted as normal. It will be assessed and an outcome issued. However, in order to ensure the student is aware of support available, the student must attend a compulsory meeting with the school or institute, e.g. with their Advisor, for the outcome to be confirmed and the adjustment applied.
- 8.9. Students may submit a maximum of one self-certification claim in each examination period. Students whose circumstances impact more than a period of 7 calendar days covered by a self-certification claim can submit a standard claim or an additional standard claim i.e. a claim with evidence.
- 8.10. If a student submits a self-certification claim in more than one exam period each academic year, it will be assessed and an outcome issued. However, the student must attend a compulsory meeting with the school or institute, e.g. with their Advisor, to understand the implication of extenuating circumstances on progression before the outcome is confirmed and the adjustment applied.
- 8.11. The maximum adjustment for written coursework from a self-certification claim is 7

calendar days. Outcomes for other forms of assessment may not be restricted by the 7 day deadline ie where it is not feasible or practical for the assessment to be rescheduled within 7 calendar days.

- 8.12. Where a student submits a self-certification claim requesting an adjustment which cannot be granted under the policy e.g. a 14-day extension, the EC Assessor will consider the claim and, if it is accepted, where possible, will inform the student of an outcome for their assessment that can be considered within the policy.

9. Claim outcomes

Assessing a claim

- 9.1. The assessment of the claim will include adherence to the extenuating circumstances cut-off, the definitions outlined in this policy and the information and evidence submitted.
- 9.2. If additional information or evidence is required, the student must provide the requested information or evidence as soon as possible and within 7 calendar days of the request.

Possible outcomes

- 9.3. An extenuating circumstances claim may be declined if it is outside the extenuating circumstances policy or if the information or evidence provided are not adequate to substantiate the claim.
- 9.4. Where a claim is accepted, possible outcomes could include (this list is not exhaustive and outcomes can be dependent on assessments):
- a) Provide an **extension** to a written coursework deadline. Extensions would normally be a maximum 7 calendar days. Exceptionally, where evidence demonstrates a longer extension may be needed, this may be considered.
 - b) Wholly or partially **waive a penalty for late submission** of written coursework.
 - c) **Rearrangement of scheduled assessment** e.g., in class test, presentations, practical demonstrations, practical assessments, laboratory sessions, fieldwork.

- d) **Discount** the affected element of assessment from the module mark where the missed element is worth 20% or less of the module and where the Subject Exam Board (SEB) (or SEB Chair) is satisfied that all required module learning outcomes can be adequately tested through the remaining assessments.
- 9.5. Award a **replacement attempt**. This means that the missed assessment opportunity will not count, and a fresh attempt will be awarded at the next opportunity. These are also known as certified absence and first sit. The new attempt (first sit) retains all characteristics of the missed attempt, including the attempt number and whether the module mark will be capped.
- 9.6. Where a final year student meets the minimum requirements for award, **defer classification** to let the student take any available assessments at the next available opportunity (requires consideration from the Subject and Degree Exam Boards).
- 9.7. Queen Mary cannot award extra marks as an outcome of a claim for extenuating circumstances. Assessment is designed to measure achievement, not potential, and marks cannot be awarded for what a student may have had the potential to achieve.
- 9.8. Any additional attempt or extended attempt awarded as an outcome of an extenuating circumstances claim must take place within the maximum duration of study. Students may still submit an extenuating circumstances claim but the acceptance of the claim does not automatically mean they will be permitted to continue studying.
- 9.9. A 15 working day return of marks cannot be guaranteed where the original deadline is not met (even for good reason).

Informing students on the outcomes

- 9.10. Where a decision can be made by the EC Assessor/s:
- a) **Coursework**: the student should expect to be notified of the outcome as soon as possible and within 5 working days.
 - b) Students requesting an extended deadline should always continue working on their assessment and not wait for an outcome from their claim.

- c) **Exams:** Outcomes will normally be published after the examination and within 10 working days of the end of the examination period.

- 9.11. Where the claim is referred to the oversight panel, the student will be notified of when they should expect to hear the outcome.
- 9.12. Where an outcome is different to that requested, or the claim has been declined, details will be provided e.g. where a self -certification claim requesting a 14 day extension has been accepted, the student will be advised of the maximum 7 day extension.

10. Appeals

- 10.1. A student who believes their extenuating circumstances have not been properly taken into account may appeal the outcome using the Academic Appeals Policy.
- 10.2. Academic Appeals should be submitted within 21 calendar days after receiving a confirmed outcome of an extenuating circumstances claim.

11. Associated information

- 11.1. Students found to have intentionally submitted false information or evidence will be investigated under the [Student Discipline Policy](#).
- 11.2. The regulations governing assessment, progression and awards can be found in the [Academic Regulations](#).

12. Advice and Support

- 12.1. The support available to students is outlined on our [Wellbeing Hub](#). There is [guidance on extenuating circumstances](#). Students can seek advice from their school or institute, the [Students' Union Academic Advice Service](#), or AskQM.
- 12.2. Students may wish to speak to their Advisor or Module Organiser for advice on submitting assessments to a new deadline or taking deferred assessments.

Care experienced and estranged students

- 12.3. Care experienced and estranged students have higher rates of poor mental health

compared to the general population, as well as other health issues, special educational needs and other difficulties that impact on their ability to engage e.g. homelessness, loss of family support (emotional & financial) etc. Care experienced and estranged students experiencing significant and unforeseen circumstances that are outside their control should use the extenuating circumstances policy and process where this is impacting assessment.

- 12.4. Care experienced and estranged students can access specialist support from the Advice and Counselling Service.

Carers

- 12.5. Carers are more likely to be hit by crises beyond their control due to having caring responsibilities. Becoming a carer, taking on new caring responsibilities as well as an acute increase in caring responsibilities are unforeseen events. These may impact on in person attendance at scheduled coursework activity, coursework submission deadlines and exams. Carers experiencing unpredictable and changing needs should use the extenuating policy and process where this is impacting their assessments.
- 12.6. Students with caring responsibilities can access specialist support from the Advice and Counselling Service.

Disabled students

- 12.7. Students who have a long-term health condition, disability, specific learning difference or mental health diagnosis should contact the Disability and Dyslexia Service (DDS). The Disability and Dyslexia Service can make recommendations for support and reasonable adjustments. It is anticipated that the reasonable adjustments will support students to study and to work effectively to submit their coursework and examinations to the agreed deadlines. A disability is not, therefore, a justification for an extenuating circumstances claim in and of itself.
- 12.8. Some students with long-term and/or episodic conditions may need to submit extenuating circumstances if their condition flares. The Disability and Dyslexia Service can

agree on a reasonable adjustment that negates the need for such students to evidence their extenuating circumstance claim if it is based on that condition.

- 12.9. Where students feel that they are unable to complete an assessment because of the way that it is designed and the impact this may have on their disability they can approach the Disability and Dyslexia Service to discuss whether an alternative assessment might be possible. If there is not sufficient time to process this request before the assessment deadline, the student should consider applying for extenuating circumstances to explain their circumstances and that they are awaiting a review by DDS.

13. Review

- 13.1. This policy will be reviewed by the Student Experience Directorate at least every three years.
- 13.2. Minor updates to this policy that do not affect the rules, principles or intent of this policy may be approved by the Director of Student Experience (Student Experience Directorate) on behalf of Senate.

Policy Information and Document Control

Policy title	Extenuating Circumstances Policy
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Related policies and procedures	Student Discipline Policy. Academic Regulations. Academic Appeals Policy Reasonable Adjustment in Assessment Policy
Superseded policies	Guidance was previously in the Academic Regulations and Assessment Handbook
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Policy owner	Director of Student Experience
Policy contact	Student Experience Student-experience@qmul.ac.uk

Version Control

Version	Date	Reason for updates/Summary of key changes
V1	01/04/25	Policy - final