



Policy on Extenuating Circumstances

Student Guide 2011-12

1. What are Extenuating Circumstances?

Extenuating circumstances are serious unforeseen circumstances beyond your control which prevented you from meeting the requirements of your programme which might include:

- Missing an examination or test
- Failing to submit all or any part of any continuous assessments by the due date
- Performing below your ability in work submitted or examinations attended
- Circumstances that persisted throughout the semester or a substantial part of it that affected your performance

Extenuating circumstances may include:

- Involvement in an accident
- Victim of crime
- An acute illness or serious on-going medical condition
- Ongoing life-threatening illness of a close family member or partner
- Bereavement of a close family member or partner
- Acute or on-going serious personal/emotional circumstances
- Domestic upheaval at the time of the assessment (e.g. fire, burglary, eviction)

The following are examples of what may not normally be considered grounds for extenuating circumstances and any applications citing any of the following are unlikely to be considered by the Programme Examination Boards:

- Typical symptoms associated with exam stress (e.g. anxiety, sleeping disturbances etc)
- Minor illnesses such as a common cold
- Relationship difficulties
- Financial difficulties
- Holidays during the academic year
- Accommodation issues
- Commuting issues
- Misreading the examination timetable
- Paid employment or voluntary work *
- IT and/or computer failure
- English is not your first language
- Multiple assessments in a short time
- Failure to plan study schedule
- Sporting commitments **
- Debs/weddings/social events
- Election/campaigning commitments

Please note: the above examples are not definitive, and are intended only as a guide. In all cases, the Programme Examination Board has ultimate authority to use its discretion, taking into account the full circumstances of a particular case.

* **Work commitments** are not normally considered to be extenuating circumstances. However a student on a part-time and/or continuing professional education programme may have work-related extenuating circumstances outside of the norm (e.g. a work-related court case that they legally must attend) and in these exceptional cases, they should consult the appropriate programme/school office for advice.

** **Sporting Commitments** are not normally considered grounds for extenuating circumstances. Where applicable, the student should refer to the Policy on Late Submission of Coursework.



2. How do I make an Application?

Before you make an application, it is important that you seek guidance and support. Those who provide student support include the Students' Union, members of academic staff, student advisers, chaplains, Programme Office and School Office staff. Having sought advice from a representative of the Students' Union or relevant staff member, you should proceed with making an application.

You must complete the Application Form for Extenuating Circumstances which is divided into six sections (A to F).

Section A – Personal Information

General personal information required: name, student number, contact number, e-mail address, programme, stage.

Section B – Requested Action

In this section, you must state which specific consideration you wish the Programme Examination Board to take into account in determining your final grade. You must also list the module codes and titles. Take great care that you specify the module codes correctly. The considerations you may seek are:

- Request that particular circumstances be taken into account in determining your final grade,
- Request permission to withdraw from a module without academic penalty; or
- Request permission to complete outstanding component/s of a module without penalty.

Please list the modules and the outcome per module you are requesting and ensure that the correct modules codes are given.

On page 2 of the Application Form the following details are required:

1. Indicate the impact of the circumstances on your work and relevant dates.
2. Provide details of assessments missed, dates etc (if applicable).
3. Confirm whether or not you have contacted the relevant Module Coordinator and/or School and list any action that they suggested.

Section C – Nature of your Extenuating Circumstances

This provides you with the opportunity to express the nature of your extenuating circumstances and the impact you perceive these to have had on your ability to fulfill your assessment requirements. You must describe as clearly as possible the circumstances which have affected you and the extent to which you have been affected.

You need to be candid because the better the understanding that those reading the form develop of your circumstances, the more appropriate will be the outcome for you. You can be assured that confidentiality is maintained and the people will read your application form only on a “need to know” basis.

You will also need to indicate, using the categories available, which type of circumstances best reflect your situation.

Section D – Evidence supporting your application

When submitting an application, you must provide verifiable written confirmation that supports your application for extenuating circumstances, the purpose of which is to help the University to understand and verify the nature of the circumstances which have affected you. This evidence must express an opinion as to the extent to which your performance or ability to perform has been affected. If any of the circumstances are sensitive, you should discuss with the person providing the evidence the need to express the impact of the circumstances along with necessary information regarding the incident/situation.



Please note:

- Evidence must relate to the specific application for extenuating circumstances being made.
- You may not use a family member to provide evidence.
- The documentation provided must be consistent with the application in terms of matters such as dates, circumstances etc. The Programme Examination Board reserves the right to reject any application in cases where there are serious discrepancies between the documentation and the application.
- The Programme Examination Board reserves the right to verify and seek further details on this documentation.

Only evidence from one of the following qualified professionals will be accepted:

- Registered medical practitioner/health professional
- Member of An Garda Síochána
- Registered counsellor/psychotherapist
- Psychologist
- UCD student support professional (i.e. UCD Student Adviser; member of the UCD Access/New ERA or Disability Support Service staff; official UCD student counsellor or UCD Chaplain).

Any evidence must be on headed paper and must be legible, stamped and dated.

The University takes very seriously the issue of fraudulent applications. Should a Programme Examination Board discover that an application is supported by forged or incorrect evidence, the matter may be referred to the University's disciplinary process.

Section E – Student Declaration

You must sign and date the application form.

Section F – Received by the Programme Office (undergraduate students) or Graduate School Office (graduate students)

It is recommended that you retain a copy of the application and supporting documentation for your records as supporting documentation is non-returnable.



3. What are the next steps?

To whom do I submit this form?

If you are registered to an **undergraduate** programme, you must submit the original signed hardcopy application form and evidence to your Programme Office. It is your responsibility to take photocopies if you wish to keep a copy of your application form. A Programme Office may refuse to accept incomplete or late applications.

If you are registered to a **graduate** programme, you should complete the form and discuss it with the relevant School or Programme Coordinator with a view to seeking a local and quick solution. If this is not possible, the form will be referred to the Graduate School Office.

When must I submit this form?

Hardcopy applications for extenuating circumstances must be submitted as close as possible to the time the circumstances occurred and within 5 working days of the University end of semester examination period.

You should note that in the case of end-of-semester 1 examinations, the University re-opens in early January – you are advised to check dates for submission of applications with your Programme Office.

In very exceptional circumstances, it may not be possible to meet this deadline. In these circumstances you should contact your Programme Office/School as soon as is practicable for advice.

What happens after I submit the form?

Undergraduate Students: Your Programme Office will alert any relevant UCD staff member about your application whilst preserving confidentiality. Your form will be reviewed by the appropriate Programme Examination Board or delegated committee, which will reach a decision as to whether or not your particular circumstances will be taken into account when considering your academic performance.

Graduate Students: the issue will be considered by the relevant School. If the application cannot be solved at a local level, the matter will be referred to the Graduate Programme Board, whilst preserving confidentiality.

Who makes the decision?

The Programme Examination Board makes the decision about your extenuating circumstances.

What are the possible outcomes?

If your application for extenuating circumstances is accepted, one of the following outcomes will apply:

Outcome 1

If you asked that your special circumstances be taken into account by the Programme Examination Board in determining your final grade for the module(s), the School(s) involved will have taken this into account when submitting a final grade for your module. You will not be given details of the decisions made and the grade changes made (if any).

Outcome 2

If you are granted the opportunity to have specific components of a module assessed on a further occasion without academic penalty, you will be awarded an IX grade for that module. You must contact the School for details on how to complete the assessment for the module. Your result will not be capped. You must complete the component (or components) of assessment, or complete some equivalent assessment(s) set by the School, within a period prescribed by the School but no later than the end of the subsequent semester in which you are registered.



Outcome 3

If you are permitted to withdraw from the module without academic penalty and take the module on another occasion, a WX grade will appear on your record. Your final result will not be capped. You may substitute another module for this module in accordance with rules for substitution of modules.

If your application for extenuating circumstances is not successful and you fail a module, you will be expected to avail of the usual remediation opportunities for the components or modules in question provided to all other students. If you wish to appeal the decision of the Programme Examination Board, you may follow the procedures under Appeals Assessment route.

- http://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicsecretariat/pol_ext_circum.pdf
http://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicsecretariat/pol_ext_circum_proforma.doc

