



Policy on Extenuating Circumstances

Staff Guide 2011-12

1. Introduction

The following guidance notes have been drawn up to assist academic and administrative staff to operate and implement the Policy on Extenuating Circumstances. It is intended to provide information to staff on the key principles to be adhered to when considering applications along with examples of what is and what is not considered grounds for extenuating circumstances. Guidance is provided on responsibilities of (1) the student, (2) the School, (3) the Programme Office and (4) the Programme Examination Board. Information is also provided on the extenuating circumstances grades (IX and WX).

Key points to note

UCD is committed to the principle of equity in the treatment of all our students and applications for extenuating circumstances are considered on an individual basis and with great care. The policy is designed to help students who face a significant challenge or difficulty during their studies.

If a student knows **in advance** for good reason that they will be unable to complete a piece of continuous assessment, they should apply for an extension by submitting the Application Form for Late Submission of Coursework to the relevant School Office, to seek an extension from the School concerned.

Students who require ongoing support and accommodations on the grounds of a verifiable disability are encouraged to register with the Disability Support Service as soon as possible. For further information please refer to www.ucd.ie/disability.

Staff should note that an application for consideration of extenuating circumstances is not a substitute for local decision-making where a student, for example, misses a lecture, tutorial, seminar or lab due to circumstances that are not extenuating, and especially where these aspects of a module (for example, attendance at lectures) are not formal components of assessment of the module.

The Application Form for Extenuating Circumstances should be submitted as soon as possible after the occurrence of the circumstances described but must be submitted within **5 working days** of the University end of semester examination period. A Programme Examination Board may decide whether or not to consider applications received **after** the deadline.

The Programme Examination Board makes the decision regarding applications for extenuating circumstances based on the information provided with the form completed by the student. This decision is final and the student may appeal the outcome through the UCD Assessment Appeals route.

The Programme Examination Board reserves the right to verify and seek further details on supporting documentation and the application form. In the case of a fraudulent application, the matter may be referred to the University's disciplinary process.



2. What are Extenuating Circumstances?

Extenuating circumstances are serious unforeseen circumstances beyond the student's control which prevented the student from meeting the requirements of their 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 ability in work submitted or examinations attended
- Circumstances that persisted throughout the semester or a substantial part of it that affected 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.

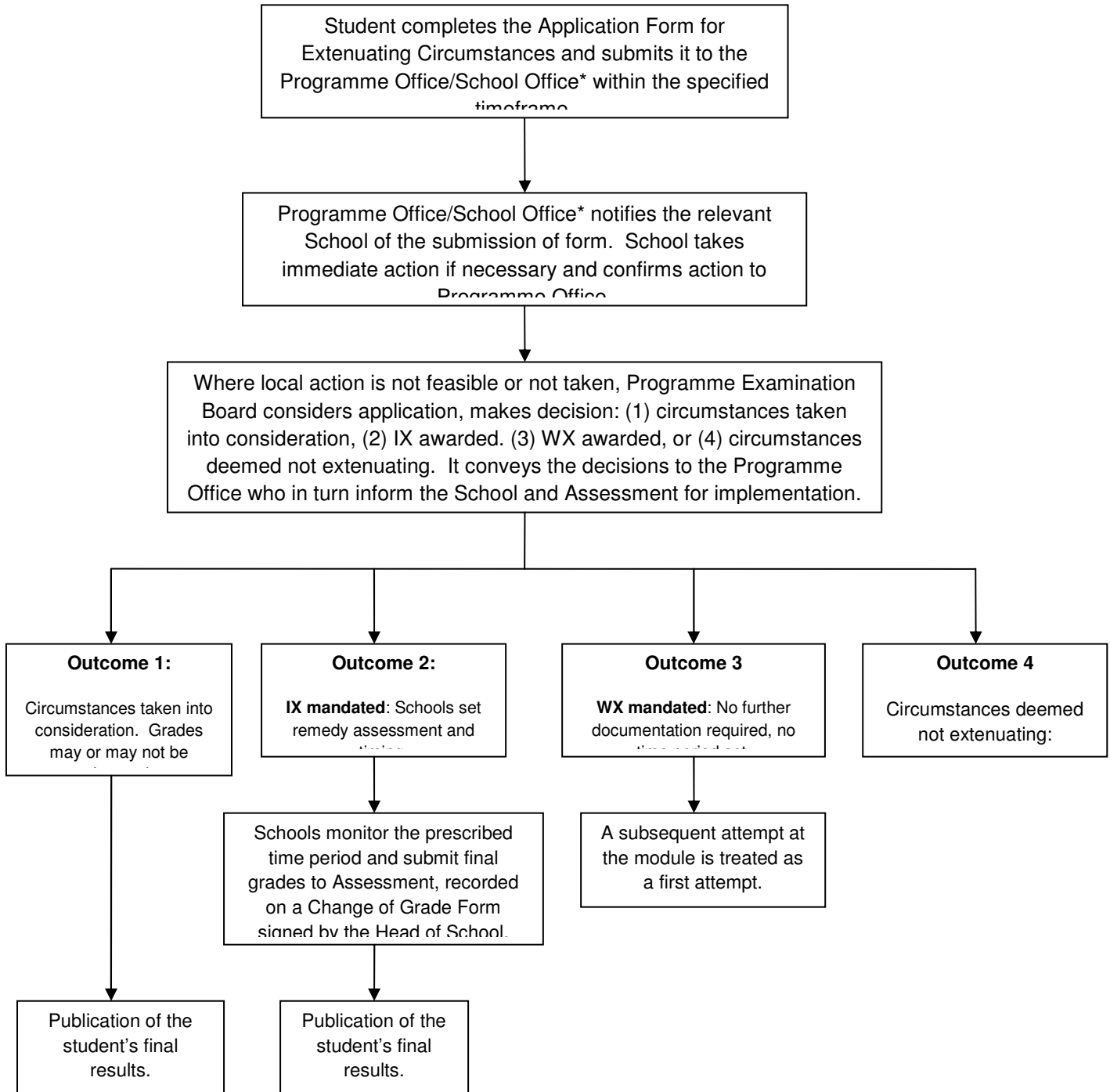
* **Work commitments** are not normally considered to be extenuating circumstances. However a student on a part-time and/or continuing professional education programme may have work-related extenuating circumstances outside of the norm (e.g. a work-related court case that they legally must attend) and 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 appropriate, the student should refer to the Policy on Late Submission of Coursework.



3. Outline of Procedure

Procedures for dealing with applications may vary from Programme to Programme. The Programme Examination Board may delegate authority to a pre-Board or committee to make recommendations on applications. However, the following procedure should broadly apply across the University:



* Applications from undergraduate students must be submitted to the relevant Programme Office. Applications from graduate students must be submitted to the relevant School Office or Programme Office as appropriate.



The Student's Responsibility

1. In cases where a student believes that their academic performance has been adversely affected by unforeseen circumstances beyond their control, they should contact the School or Module Coordinator to discuss possible remediation solutions.
2. If local remediation action is not possible or appropriate, the student, having read the Student Guide to the Policy on Extenuating Circumstances, should complete in full an Application Form for Extenuating Circumstances and provide supporting evidence.
3. The student submits the Application Form to the Programme Office (in the case of undergraduate programmes) or School Office (in the case of graduate programmes) as soon as possible after the occurrence of the circumstances described but must be submitted within **5 working days** of the University end of semester examination period.

The School's Responsibility

1. The School is responsible, when contacted by the student in the first instance, for considering any possible local remediation action that may be appropriate. It is not always necessary for the student to submit an Application Form for Extenuating Circumstances. If the School can take local action, such as granting an extension to a deadline, then the necessity for IX and WX grades may be avoided.
2. Where an IX Grade is approved by the Programme Examination Board, the Module Coordinator, on behalf of the School is responsible for setting the remedy assessment, the timing of its submission and forwarding the Change of Grade form to the Head of School for approval.
3. The Head of School approves and signs off on the change of grade and submits it to Assessment so that the final grade can be entered on the student's academic record. A copy should be sent to the relevant Programme Office(s).

The Programme Office's Responsibility

1. On receiving a completed application form from the student, the Programme Office is responsible for notifying the relevant School offices that an application has been submitted.
2. The application is prepared for consideration by the Programme Examination Board or delegated committee which is authorised by the Programme Examination Board to make decisions on its behalf.
3. The Programme Office receives the decisions reached by the Programme Examination Board and communicates them to the relevant Schools and to UCD Registry, Assessment.

The Programme Examination Board's Responsibility

1. The Programme Examination Board approves the outcome of each application for extenuating circumstances.
2. Where appropriate, the Programme Examination Board approves IX or WX grades.
3. The Programme Examination Board communicates its decisions to the Programme Office.
4. Where the Programme Examination Board approves a number of IX grades in a semester, this should trigger a discussion with the student.



Retrospective Extenuating Circumstances Applications

Applications for Extenuating Circumstances must be submitted within **5 working days** of the University end of semester examination period. Late applications will be considered only in very exceptional circumstances where a valid and substantial reason is given for the late submission. It is at the discretion of the Programme Examination Board whether or not to consider late applications. On approval of an application for retrospective extenuating circumstances, the Programme Examination Board returns an IX or WX grade using a Change of Grade form.

IX Grade

An IX grade (incomplete, extenuating circumstances) may be returned either (a) on the recommendation of a School and approved by the Programme Examination Board, or (b) on the recommendation of the Programme Examination Board, where:

- a student has been unable to satisfactorily complete a component (or components) of assessment; and
- the student provides medical or other certification according to a UCD proforma supporting the position that they had an incapacitating illness or circumstance which prevented them from so doing.

The student 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 the student is registered. Where the assessments set by the School are completed within the prescribed time, the final aggregate grade and the full grade point associated with that grade are awarded, along with the associated credit (provided the final grade is a passing grade) and the incomplete is removed from the transcript. Where the student does not complete some or all of the required assessments within the prescribed time, a final aggregate grade is calculated at the end of the semester by carrying forward where necessary the grades for the incomplete components of assessment from the original attempt.

Process for the IX Grade

- On approval of an application for extenuating circumstances, a Programme Examination Board returns an IX grade. The minutes of the Programme Examination Board must be signed by the Chair of the Programme Examination Board and sent, via the Programme Office, to Assessment, UCD Registry mandating the IX grade. A Change of Grade Form is **not** required at this stage.
- The student is given a prescribed period in which to remedy the IX grade. This period is set by the Module Coordinator, on behalf of the School, and he/she monitors this prescribed period.
- Where a student successfully completes the outstanding assessment(s) set by the Module Coordinator, the Module Coordinator must record the new grade that the student receives on a Change of Grade Form. The Change of Grade Form is forwarded by the Module Coordinator to the Head of School for his/her approval. Following this, the Change of Grade Form is sent by the Head of School to Assessment so that the final grade can be entered on the student's academic record. A copy should be sent to the Programme Office(s).
- Where a student does not complete the outstanding assessment(s) in the prescribed period (normally, no later than the end of the subsequent semester in which the student is registered), the Module Coordinator records the default grade that the student received on their first attempt at the module on a Change of Grade Form. This form must be signed by the Head of School and sent to Assessment, UCD Registry. A copy should be sent to the Programme Office(s).

WX Grade

A WX grade is returned by the Programme Examination Board for a student who has had an extenuating circumstance that has caused them to withdraw after the first six weeks of the semester or to be absent from a



module. The student must provide medical or other certification according to a UCD Proforma indicating that they have an incapacitating illness or circumstance which prevented them from completing the module and/or associated assessments.

No credit is awarded and a subsequent attempt at the module is treated as a first attempt.

Usually a WX is returned when a student has extenuating circumstances of a severe nature and there is a strong possibility that the extenuating circumstances will still adversely impact on the student's ability to complete the module requirements by the end of the next semester.

Process for WX Grade

- A WX grade is returned by the Programme Examination Board. The minutes of the Programme Examination Board must be signed by the Chair of the Programme Examination Board and sent, via the Programme Office, to Assessment, UCD Registry mandating the WX grade. A Change of Grade Form is **not** required at this stage.
- A WX grade is not required to convert into another grade. Where a WX grade is returned there is no further documentation required.

What is the difference between an IX and a WX grade?

When a student is given an IX grade, he or she is given a period of time in which to complete the assessment for the module in question. The IX component is aggregated with the other components of the modules and the student is given the resulting grade. It is therefore the completion of "old business". A WX grade is the opportunity given to take a module again as if the first attempt had never happened.

4. Supporting Documentation

- Policy on Extenuating Circumstances http://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicsecretariat/pol_ext_circum.pdf
- Application Form for Extenuating Circumstances
http://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicsecretariat/pol_ext_circum_proforma.doc
- Student Guide to the Policy on Extenuating Circumstances
http://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicsecretariat/pol_ext_circum_gn.pdf

