



CASPIAN
SCHOOL OF ACADEMICS

Procedure 4.12

EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES AND REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

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Extenuating Circumstances and Reasonable Adjustments

Learning Teaching & Assessment

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1. Introduction

The aim of this procedure is to ensure that no student is disadvantaged in successfully completing their chosen programme of study because of serious or significant circumstances beyond their control.

The Caspian School of Academics (CSA) procedure on extenuating circumstances reflects and builds on the guiding principles in the UK Quality Code relating to assessment and enabling student achievement. For qualifications within the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF), relevant regulatory and awarding-body requirements also apply.

CSA encourages students to become resilient, thriving individuals and competent, confident professionals. While studying with us, students are expected to manage the normal challenges of life, including minor illnesses or personal issues, so that these do not affect their studies or their ability to attend or complete assessments.

The School recognises, however, that students may face a serious situation that significantly affects their ability to attend or complete assessments. The School refers to such situations as 'extenuating circumstances' (ECs). This procedure explains how the School can support students by taking such circumstances into account.

The School defines extenuating circumstances as circumstances that:

- have a significant impact on a student's ability to attend or complete one or more assessments;
- are exceptional;
- are outside the student's control; and/or
- occurred during, or shortly before, the assessment in question.

Section 2 provides more detail about circumstances that the School may or may not recognise as extenuating circumstances.

Where a student is experiencing valid extenuating circumstances, the School may take them into account and make a reasonable adjustment by allowing the student, for example, to:

- submit an assessment after the published deadline;
- not submit an assessment, but undertake reassessment at the next opportunity without penalty; or
- not attend a time-specific assessment, such as an examination, test, presentation, performance or field class, but undertake reassessment at the next opportunity without penalty.

The precise outcome of a valid claim depends on the nature of the affected assessment and, in some cases, the decision of the Assessment Board, which will consider the student's full academic profile. This procedure therefore cannot prescribe the outcome for every situation. Reassessment opportunities normally follow the Assessment Board at the end of each semester or delivery period. A referral period then allows assessments to be resubmitted or, where they were missed because of extenuating circumstances, submitted without penalty. Alternatively, students may be offered the opportunity to undertake modules in the following academic year or, for RQF qualifications, be given additional time to meet the expected learning outcomes.

There is a limit to the amount of reassessment normally allowed in any one semester. However, a module or unit that is not achieved because of accepted extenuating circumstances will not normally count towards this limit.

If students believe that extenuating circumstances are affecting their ability to attend or complete an assessment, they must:

- not sit the examination or test, or complete, attend or submit any other affected assessment; and
- submit an Extenuating Circumstances Claim Form before the assessment wherever possible, or within the applicable deadline set out in Section 3.

Where a student sits an examination or test, or completes, attends or submits an assessment, this will normally be treated as a declaration that they were fit to do so.

Section 3 explains how to submit an extenuating circumstances claim. Section 4 explains how claims are considered.

1.1 Extenuating circumstances and group work

Students may be required to prepare an assessment as a group with a member whose ability to fulfil their role is affected by extenuating circumstances. The School expects groups to have contingency arrangements for absence. In some cases, however, the impact may make it impossible for the group to attend or complete the assessment task. The affected student should submit an extenuating circumstances claim in accordance with this procedure. Other group members whose assessment is also affected should each submit a claim and explain how the affected member's absence has affected their work. The group should discuss the circumstances with the Module Leader or another appropriate member of teaching staff to determine whether the assessment can continue and to avoid unnecessary reassessment.

2. Scope of extenuating circumstances

2.1 Potentially valid circumstances

People may be affected differently by similar circumstances, so it is not possible to provide a definitive list. Examples of serious or significant situations that the School may consider valid include:

- the student's own health problems, including a major accident or injury, acute illness, hospitalisation (including for an operation), or a condition affecting a significant period of study;
- personal or psychological difficulties for which the student is receiving counselling or has been referred to a counsellor or similarly qualified practitioner;
- clinical depression or another significant mental health condition;
- pregnancy-related conditions and childbirth, including where the student's partner is in labour;
- bereavement that has a significant impact on the student;
- the separation or divorce of the student or the student's parents;
- a recent burglary, theft or serious road traffic accident;
- jury service that cannot be deferred;
- representing the School at national level, representing the student's country at international level, or participating in an event that benefits the School's national or international reputation;
- for part-time students in full-time employment, exceptional work pressure or a permanent change in employment circumstances;
- a late diagnosis of a condition such as dyslexia, where appropriate assessment support, including examination arrangements, was not in place;
- disruption during an examination or assessment, such as a fire alarm or excessive noise from building work;
- an interview for a placement where the student asked the employer or provider to reschedule but this was not possible; or
- a significant positive life event, such as the wedding of a close family member, where the student can demonstrate that no alternative arrangement was possible.

2.2 Circumstances unlikely to be valid

The key consideration is whether a claim meets the definition in Section 1. Students are expected to plan their work to allow for normal day-to-day difficulties, including minor illnesses or personal issues. Such circumstances are therefore unlikely to be accepted.

Examples of circumstances that the School is unlikely to consider valid include:

- oversleeping or an alarm clock not going off;
- a car breaking down, or a train, bus or equivalent service being delayed or cancelled, unless the student can demonstrate that they made reasonable allowance for such disruption;
- childcare problems or similar caring difficulties that could reasonably have been anticipated;
- unspecified short-term anxiety, mild depression or examination stress;
- a minor illness, such as a cough, cold, sore throat or minor viral infection, unless it is incapacitating

- and at its peak at the time of a time-specific assessment such as an examination or test;
- an accident or illness affecting a relative or friend, unless it is serious or the student is the sole carer;
 - financial problems, including debt-related sanctions imposed by the School, except in cases of exceptional hardship or a significant change in financial circumstances since enrolment;
 - family celebrations, holidays, house moves or similar events where the student could influence the date or choose not to participate;
 - computing problems, such as corrupted data or media, poor internet connectivity, printer failure, submission of a file in the wrong format, or lack of access to IT facilities;
 - problems with postal or other third-party delivery of work;
 - misreading a timetable, or time-management difficulties such as assessment deadlines being close together;
 - appointments, including legal or medical appointments, that could reasonably be rearranged;
 - sporting, recreational or voluntary commitments; or
 - for full-time students, normal pressures of employment, because enrolment includes a commitment to make sufficient time available for study.

2.3 Disability and long-term health conditions

Disability

A student who has a disability should contact the Student Welfare Officer. Teaching and support staff will normally be able to identify, provide or arrange reasonable adjustments, including specific teaching and learning support. Programme Leaders are responsible for ensuring that appropriate assessment arrangements are made. Where adjustments have been agreed and implemented before an assessment, the student should not normally need to use the extenuating circumstances process in relation to the effects addressed by those adjustments.

Exceptional issues may nevertheless arise in connection with an individual student's condition and require consideration beyond the adjustments already made. In such cases, the student's support documentation may be used as evidence for an extenuating circumstances claim. This procedure applies in full to extenuating circumstances that are unrelated to the student's disability.

A student will be referred to the Academic Board if they submit three extenuating circumstances claims within six months, or if the number or pattern of claims gives cause for concern at any time. The Academic Offences Procedure will apply where a claim is suspected to be fraudulent.

Long-term health conditions

A long-term health condition is a mental or physical condition that:

- is persistent, typically lasts for more than three months and is often lifelong;
- cannot be resolved quickly, may recur regardless of action, or requires long-term management;
- may require the student to seek help with some activities but is not otherwise disabling; or
- can be managed but may flare up.

If a significant flare-up affects a student's ability to attend or complete an assessment, the student must submit an extenuating circumstances claim for the affected assessment or assessments. Rather than providing the same evidence for every claim, the student may notify the School of the long-term condition once each academic year. This notification should be supported by a statement from the student's GP, hospital consultant or other appropriate specialist confirming the nature, severity, duration and effect of the condition. The Student Welfare Officer may also be able to arrange additional learning support.

A student who has notified the School of a long-term health condition must still submit a claim for each assessment they cannot attend or complete because of a significant flare-up, but will not normally need to resubmit the same evidence.

Students must inform the Student Welfare Officer of any material improvement or deterioration in their condition so that their arrangements can be reassessed. The School may request updated evidence from time to time and will contact students at the start of each academic year to review their case.

Temporary acute conditions

A student with a temporary acute condition, such as a broken wrist, should contact their Tutor or Programme Leader as soon as possible so that additional study support and assessment arrangements can be put in place. The student should not normally need to use the extenuating circumstances process unless the support provided does not adequately address the difficulty or other issues arise.

3. Making a claim

To make a claim, a student should obtain an Extenuating Circumstances Claim Form from the Student Welfare Officer or their Tutor, or use the form in Appendix 1. The completed form should be submitted to the Programme Leader in person or by email.

3.1 Timing and retrospective claims

Students should submit their claim as soon as possible. For assessments other than examinations, the form must be submitted no later than ten working days after the submission deadline or the date of a time-specific assessment, such as a presentation, performance or test.

Students must complete the form accurately and fully. The School can take circumstances into account only where it receives the necessary information, including the dates on which the circumstances occurred and the assessments affected.

Under the Academic Regulations, a late or retrospective claim will be considered only where there is an exceptional reason for not submitting it on time, such as impaired judgement resulting from a mental health condition. The student must provide evidence explaining why they could not engage with the process within the normal deadline. Supporting evidence may be submitted in a sealed envelope marked 'Confidential'. A wish not to disclose personal information will not normally constitute an exceptional reason for late submission.

Unless exceptional circumstances of this kind are demonstrated, a late or retrospective claim will be deemed invalid. An appeal against an Assessment Board decision based on retrospective extenuating circumstances will normally be rejected.

3.2 Evidence and self-certification

Self-certification for circumstances lasting five working days or fewer

A student may self-certify extenuating circumstances that affect them for five working days or fewer. This provision applies where the student expects to be fit to sit, complete or attend assessments within five working days of the circumstances beginning. Self-certification requires the student to describe the circumstances and explain how they affected the student's ability to attend or complete the assessment, but independent evidence of the circumstances is not required.

A separate self-certification claim must be submitted for every affected assessment, including each time-specific assessment such as an examination. One claim cannot cover multiple assessments within a five-working-day period.

If accepted, a self-certified claim is likely to result in one of the following outcomes:

- an extension of no more than five working days for coursework in a taught module; or
- for another type of assessment, reassessment at the next opportunity without penalty, subject to the Assessment Board's decision.

A self-certified claim does not remove the requirement to submit or complete an assessment, even where that assessment accounts for only a small proportion of a module grade.

The reassessment opportunity available depends on the effect of the circumstances on the student's academic profile and their performance in other modules. The Assessment Board will determine the outcome.

Circumstances lasting more than five working days

Unless evidence of a long-term health condition has already been validated under Section 2.3, a claim relating to circumstances lasting more than five working days must be supported by independent, reliable documentary evidence confirming the nature and timing of the circumstances. The claim must also

explain how the circumstances affected the student's ability to attend or complete assessments.

The School may take reasonable steps to verify any evidence submitted. If the School cannot authenticate the material to its satisfaction, it may decline the claim.

Independent evidence should meet the following standards:

- it should be written by an appropriately qualified professional who is independent of the student; evidence from family members or friends will not normally be accepted;
- it should be on headed paper and signed and dated by the author; evidence sent by email is acceptable where it comes directly from the author's official organisational email domain;
- it should confirm that the circumstances were witnessed or verified at the relevant time, rather than merely reported retrospectively;
- it should be in English; the student is responsible for providing supporting documentation, and any translation must be completed by an accredited translator, for example a member of the Association of Translation Companies (www.atc.org.uk).
- it must not have been altered by the student; amended documentation will be inadmissible and may be considered under the Academic Offences Procedure; and
- it should be original; copies will be accepted only in exceptional circumstances. Where a claim is submitted by email, supporting documents should be scanned and attached. The School may require the original documents before validating the claim.

In exceptional cases, the School may accept evidence from a member of School staff, such as a Personal Tutor, another member of academic staff closely involved in pastoral care, the Student Welfare Officer, or a Module or Unit Lecturer. The evidence should be countersigned by the member of staff responsible for pastoral care to reduce the risk of bias.

The School will consider accepting a claim relating to circumstances lasting five working days or more where it is satisfied that the definition and evidence requirements in this procedure have been met.

Examples of corroborating evidence that may be acceptable include:

- a medical note confirming a mental or physical health condition, issued when the student was experiencing that condition. During term time, the School normally expects students to consult a registered medical practitioner and provide evidence from them;
- a letter from a counsellor confirming a personal, psychological or emotional difficulty for which the student has been receiving counselling;
- an official document, such as a police report with a police reference number, a court summons or another legal document;
- a letter from a solicitor, social worker or other official agency;
- an insurance claim document supported by a letter from the insurance company; or
- for a part-time student in full-time employment who is claiming because of exceptional work pressures, a letter from the employer confirming the circumstances.

For a claim to be valid, both the nature of the circumstances and the standard of evidence must meet the requirements in this procedure. Medical certification of a minor illness, or a document that merely records a student's retrospective report of feeling unwell, will not normally be sufficient.

4. Considering claims

Each claim will be considered individually, and all students will be treated fairly and equitably. The decision will take account of the nature, timing and severity of the circumstances and their impact on the assessment.

Claims are treated as a priority and most are considered promptly. Some claims may take longer to assess. The School will notify the student of the outcome by email to their School email address. If a claim is deemed invalid, the student will receive an explanation.

5. Appeals

A student may appeal against the School's decision to accept or reject an extenuating circumstances

claim.

An appeal must be submitted within ten working days of the outcome being communicated and may be made only on one or both of the following grounds:

- a material and demonstrable procedural irregularity in the extenuating circumstances process; or
- evidence that the School did not consider all information that was available to it when it considered the claim.

An appeal will not be considered on either of the following grounds:

- dissatisfaction with the School's reasonable academic or professional judgement when considering the claim; or
- late submission of a claim or supporting evidence where there is no compelling reason for the delay.

The appeal must be made within the ten-working-day deadline set out above.

Appendix 1: Extenuating Circumstances Claim Form

Complete this form with reference to Procedure 4.12: Extenuating Circumstances and Reasonable Adjustments. Submit the completed form to the Programme Leader in person or by email.

Full name		Student number	
Programme		Year/group	

Assessments affected

Module/unit	Programme Leader	Assessment type	Deadline	Request: extension or non-submission	Group work: yes/no

Circumstances and impact

Describe the extenuating circumstances and explain their impact on your ability to attend or complete the assessments listed above. Continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

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Start date		Expected end date	
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Are you self-certifying? You may self-certify circumstances lasting five working days or fewer. A separate claim is required for each affected assessment.

Select one	☐ Yes	☐ No
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Evidence attached (required where the claim is not self-certified)

List the independent corroborating evidence attached. If the evidence is sensitive, enclose it in a sealed envelope marked 'Confidential' with your name and student number.

Declaration: I confirm that the information provided in this form is honest and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I confirm that I have read and understood Procedure 4.12: Extenuating Circumstances and Reasonable Adjustments.

Signature		Date	
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Appendix 2: Extenuating Circumstances Staff Checklist

Evidence and previous claims	Yes	No
Does the student have a long-term health condition?		
Has the student made previous claims based on this condition?		
Is this claim self-certified?		
Number of claims in the current academic year		
Checked by and date		

Initial decision

Decision about the claim	Valid	Invalid
Decision	☐	☐

Where the initial decision is invalid

Review point	Yes	No
Is further evidence required?	☐	☐
Information required and deadline:		
Further information received (list items and dates):		

Confirmed decision

Decision based on all evidence considered	Valid	Invalid
Confirmed decision	☐	☐
Reason for an invalid decision:		

Extended submission deadlines

Module/unit	Assessment	Original deadline	Revised deadline	Notes

Note: Keep a copy of the completed checklist in the student's file. Make it available to the Chair of the Assessment Board and to external examiners or External Quality Assurers, as appropriate.