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Higher Education Extenuating Circumstances	HEPRO012	2

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Higher Education Extenuating Circumstances Procedure

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1. Procedure Statement

1.1. Activate Learning is committed to supporting you as a higher education student on your journey and expects you to submit all work for assessments by the specified deadline. However, we recognise that sometimes extenuating circumstances can impact your ability to meet deadlines and academic expectations.

1.2. The extenuating circumstances procedure is designed to support you during difficult times. It ensures that you are not unfairly disadvantaged and allows you to be assessed on equal terms with your peers.

1.3. Extenuating circumstances are defined as specific circumstances that have impacted you in the lead up to or during an assessment event or submission. They are:

- Sudden, serious and/or unpredictable or unforeseeable in nature, and
- Personal circumstances that could not be reasonably accommodated by you; and
- Likely to seriously impair your performance, and
- Taking place at the same time as an assessment event or before an assignment deadline

1.4. Students with on-going conditions and other disabilities should not need to use extenuating circumstances because there are alternative routes for arranging reasonable adjustments. Students with ongoing conditions or disabilities will benefit from contacting HE Study Support Services in order that their needs can be assessed. Where appropriate, reasonable adjustments can be put in place. However, a student can apply for extenuating circumstances if they experience a flare-up of an existing condition and can provide relevant evidence.

1.5. This procedure applies to all Higher Education[1] (HE) students with the exception of those studying on courses taught by Activate Learning and awarded by Kingston University or the University of Reading. Students studying on these courses are required to follow the relevant University's procedures as listed below:

1.5.1. Kingston University's Academic Regulations 5 (AR5): Mitigating Circumstances and student assessment

1.5.2. University of Reading's Exceptional Circumstances Policy

2. Making an extenuating circumstances request

2.1. **Your request should be submitted by completing our online extenuating circumstances form before the coursework deadline or exam date but no later than 48 hours after the submission deadline**. Requests made after the deadline will only be considered if there are valid and exceptional reasons (e.g., serious accident-causing physical incapacity).

2.2. You are responsible for submitting genuine information and evidence when applying for an evidence-based extension. Any supporting evidence must be supplied upon submission or within 10 working days of the initial application. Any student suspected of submitting dishonest applications or evidence may be subject to disciplinary action through our Student Positive Behaviour Management Policy & Procedure.

2.3. Personal information submitted by you as part of an application will only be seen by staff who are directly involved in processing and making decisions on applications.

[1] Students studying on a Higher National Certificate, Higher National Diploma, Foundation Degree or BA/Bsc (Hons) top-up Degree

3. Extenuating Circumstances categories

3.1. There is **a 24-hour grace period** after the deadline within which you can submit work without a penalty due to unforeseen circumstances. This is available for individual written assignments, except for time constrained assessments such as exams, practical assessments or presentations. No evidence is required, and approval is automatic. Repeated use may lead us to contact you to discuss any academic support options.

3.2. There are **two categories** that you can apply for under this procedure by submitting an online extenuating form through our HE Student Hub which is accessible through your Activate Learning Online (ALO) programme page.

3.2.1. **Category A - a self-certified extension** of up to one week (5 working days) before a submission of **coursework** deadline e.g. reports, essays, proposals, or another opportunity to complete the **time constraint event assessment event** such as a written exam, presentation, viva, or practical task at a later date.

3.2.2. Self-certification extensions will only be accepted for a maximum of three occasions over an academic year, and they will not be longer than 5 working days each. If a longer extension or more than three extensions have been requested, you would need to apply for an evidence-based extension instead.

3.2.3. When you self-certify (with a valid reason) you will be given an automatic 5 working days extension if you are within your self-certification extension limit for the academic year. You will receive a confirmation email within 2 working days to confirm your new submission deadline.

3.2.4. Your extension will be 5 working days from the date of your original submission date or previously extended submission date.

3.2.5. No marks / grades will be capped if coursework is submitted within the extended deadline.

3.2.6. If you are unable to attend your time constrain assessment event due to exceptional circumstances you will be provided an opportunity to take the assessment later. You must notify your tutor as soon as possible and submit your request using the online form within 48 hours of the original assessment. No penalties or grade caps will be applied to marks awarded for a deferred assessment.

3.3. **Category B – an evidence-based extension** that is longer than 5 working days or you have previously received a self-certification extension for the same assessment/s, or you have

already applied for three self-certification extensions in an academic year.

3.3.1. You can apply for an evidence-based extension up to 4 weeks before the submission deadline, supported by evidence, which will be considered by an Extenuating Circumstances (EC) panel which is a subsidiary board of the Assessment / Exam Board. The EC panel will consist of a Chair (Director of Higher Education), Academic Registrar for Higher Education, and Access & Participation Manager. The EC Panel decides whether the grounds are acceptable and the duration of the extension (up to a maximum of three weeks). When considering an application, the panel may view it in the context of your previous applications for extenuating circumstances.

3.3.2. Your request will be reviewed, and you will be notified of the outcome as soon as possible, normally **within 5 working days** of submitting a completed application.

3.3.3. You should continue working on your assessment while your evidence-based extension is being reviewed, and you should still aim to submit your work by the deadline.

3.3.4. Extenuating circumstances are expected to be rare. If multiple evidence-based extensions are requested in an academic year, we may contact you to discuss your support options. This may include a support plan, or proceeding with other options, such as suspending your studies, or withdrawal from study. Please refer to Higher Education Withdrawal or Suspension of Studies Policy & Procedure

4. Circumstances which are likely to be considered

4.1. Below are examples of circumstances that would likely be accepted as a reason for an evidence-based extenuating circumstances request. This list is not exhaustive:

- A serious short-term illness or accident which, which in an employment context, would have led to a period of sick leave
- Mental health issues
- The death of a close relative, partner or a close friend which, in an employment context, would have led to a period of compassionate leave
- A sudden and unexpected flare up of a long-term health condition of which the student

has previously notified the college

- A serious unexpected disruption of personal or family life
- Other significant exceptional factors for which there is evidence of the detrimental effect on the student, for example being a victim of crime
- Jury Service (where a request for a deferral has been declined or where jury service has previously been deferred)

5. Circumstances which are unlikely to be considered

5.1. Below are examples of circumstances that are unlikely to be accepted as a reason for an evidenced-based extenuating circumstances request. This list is not exhaustive:

- Minor illness or ailments, which in a work situation would be unlikely to lead to absence from work and the student could reasonably be expected to accommodate such as colds, coughs, hangovers
- Lifestyle choices such as holidays, attending weddings, attending sporting fixtures
- Exam stress (except where a medical diagnosis of illness has been made)
- Transport issues, accommodation disturbances, finance issues
- Poor time management/scheduling of assessments/deadlines
- Computer/printing/back-up issues

6. Supporting evidence

6.1. If you need to request a long-term extension due to exceptional circumstances, you must support your application with appropriate evidence. The type and detail of evidence required will vary depending on the seriousness of your situation but will always be assessed in proportion to your circumstances.

6.2. Your evidence must meet the following criteria:

- **Relevant** - it should independently confirm the nature of your exceptional circumstances and specify the timeframe during which these circumstances affected you.
- **Reliable** – it should be dependable and trustworthy so that a different assessor would reach the same conclusion.
- **Specific** – it should explain clearly how you were personally impacted
- **Clear** - the information should be presented in a format that is easy for the reviewing panel to understand.

6.3. If your request includes evidence that needs clarification or additional detail, the Panel may ask you to provide further documentation. This may include (but is not limited to):

- Extra supporting documents relevant to your situation
- Evidence submitted directly by a third party (e.g. medical professional or support service)
- Translations into English, if your original documents are in another language

7. Potential Outcomes

7.1. If your request meets the following conditions: – it's submitted by the deadline set in this procedure, – it relates to one of the approved reasons, – it includes appropriate supporting evidence, and – it corresponds to the period during which the assessment was affected, then your request will be approved, and you may be offered one of the following outcomes:

7.1.1. **Extra time to submit your assessment** - Waive late submission penalties for the element of assessment. The waiver will apply for a fixed period of time, which will reflect the length of time you were affected by the exceptional circumstances.

7.1.2. **Additional time beyond any extension** or reasonable adjustment already recommended and approved by HE Study Support**.**

7.1.3. **A new opportunity to complete the time constraint assessment** - you may be given an opportunity to take an exam, presentation or practical assessment at a later date, as if for the first time.

7.1.4. **Module or unit disregard** - you may be permitted to repeat the module/unit in the next academic year. In this case, full attendance and completion of all assessments will be required. No additional fees will be charged, and your marks / grades will not be capped.

7.2. In some cases, your request may not be approved. Reasons could include (but aren't limited to):

- Missing or insufficient supporting evidence
- Evidence that doesn't cover the timeframe of the affected assessment
- Circumstances that are unlikely to be accepted as valid reasons
- A late submission without a reasonable explanation
- Multiple applications for exceptional circumstances without new or significant details

7.3. Outcomes from the deliberations of the Extenuating Circumstances Panel are formally

reported to the assessment board in which the particular module / unit results are considered.

8. Support Available

8.1. If you require advice and guidance on any of the processes set out in this procedure, you should contact your tutor in the first instance or email adminHE@activatelearning.ac.uk , Higher Education Learning Partnerships (HELP) Office.

8.2. Information regarding help and support regarding mental health, other health related issues or academic support can be found on HE Student Hub

8.3. If you are unable to complete one of the applications forms yourself, due to your circumstances, you may ask a friend, family member or member of staff to do this on your behalf.

9. Review

9.1. If your extension request hasn't been approved or you are unhappy with the outcome, you can ask for a review by emailing adminHE@activatelearning.ac.uk

- You must submit your review request within 10 working days of the decision being issued.
- Requests submitted after this deadline are unlikely to be considered.

9.2. To be eligible for review, at least one of the following must apply:

9.2.1. There is evidence that your request wasn't considered in line with the procedures set out in this guidance.

9.2.2. There was an administrative error or another issue in how your request was handled.

9.2.3. The decision reached was one that no fair and reasonable person would have made based on the evidence provided.

9.2.4. The allowance you were given doesn't reflect the impact of your circumstances or the evidence submitted.

9.3. If your appeal is not upheld or permitted, a Completion of Internal Procedures letter will be issued within 14 working days, clearly outlining the outcome and reasons. You will also be informed of your right to submit a complaint to the Office of the Independant Adjudicator for Higher Education within 12 months, along with guidance on accessing advice and support.

10. Confidentiality

10.1. We take your privacy seriously and will treat any request relating to exceptional

circumstances with strict confidentiality.

10.2. Personal information submitted will only be seen by staff authorised to process and consider your request.

10.3. Details will not be shared beyond those directly involved in the assessment process, except where required by appeals procedures or professional body regulations.

10.4. Records will be securely stored and managed in line with our Information Security and Data Protection Policy & Procedure, and relevant legislation (the Data Protection Act 1998)

10.5. We recognise that information shared may include sensitive personal data (such as health or disability-related details), and this will be handled with particular care.

11. Reporting

11.1 Periodic oversight of EC processes will be undertaken by the Higher Education Academic Board (HEAB), through annual reports that review the number of applications, success rates, procedural appropriateness, and proposed enhancements.

References

Other policies and procedures referring to this procedure include:

- Positive Behaviour Management Policy & Procedure
- Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy and Procedure
- Withdrawal or Suspension of Studies Policy & Procedure for Higher Education
- Information Security and Data Protection Policy & Procedure
- Assessment & Verification Policy for Higher Education

If you require this document in an alternative format, please email complianceteam@activatelearning.ac.uk