

Extenuating Circumstances Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Academic Regulations allow Assessment Boards and Panels to take into account information provided by a student on Extenuating Circumstances that have had an adverse impact on their assessment performance.
- 1.2 This Policy sets out, for both students and staff, what should be done when you, a student, experiences an unexpected non-academic incident - Extenuating Circumstances.

2. Definition

- 2.1 Extenuating Circumstances are defined as unexpected, significantly disruptive, unpreventable circumstances and beyond a student's control. This definition also includes sudden, unexpected changes in family circumstances, which might affect the student's ability to make academic progress as a consequence of demonstrable emotional impact.
- 2.2 The RCA defines extenuating circumstances as:
 - unforeseeable - in that the student could have no prior knowledge of the event concerned.
 - unpreventable - in that the student could do nothing reasonably in their power to prevent such an event.
 - expected to have a serious impact on the student.
- 2.3 Extenuating Circumstances should not be confused with students seeking an Extension to their original assessment deadline. Requests for Extensions to assessment deadlines (where there are no Extenuating Circumstances) should be dealt with locally within the School and the academic head of the programme.
- 2.4 RCA is aware that it may be difficult to disclose personal details in these circumstances, but we are committed to supporting students through difficult or sensitive circumstances and ensuring that this information remains confidential. Students should seek support from the Student Support team (student-support@rca.ac.uk) if they are concerned about disclosing personal details. Despite any unease felt, it is essential for students to formally disclose Extenuating Circumstances early, so that any problems or issues can be considered in good time.
- 2.5 Extenuating Circumstances claims will often involve the processing of sensitive personal data, as defined by the UK Data Protection Act. Please see RCA's Data Protection Policy

([here](#)) where we outline our responsibilities to you in respect of holding sensitive and personal information.

- 2.6 RCA is committed to providing an environment free from discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation, where all members of its community are treated with respect and dignity. The Equality and Diversity Policy ([here](#)) ensures that all Extenuating Circumstances submissions are treated fairly and equally.

3. Disability and Long Standing Health Conditions

- 3.1 Disabled students should contact the Disability Adviser (Student Support: student-support@rca.ac.uk) to set-up an Inclusion Plan at the outset of their studies. The Inclusion Plan is a document co-created by the student with the Disability Adviser that describes the recommended reasonable adjustments the College has committed to providing. All students with a disability are strongly advised to contact the College's Disability Adviser at the earliest opportunity to ensure that they receive guidance and have the relevant support in place.
- 3.2 In cases where students manage long standing health conditions (including a physical or mental health condition) the Extenuating Circumstances provision should only be used where:
- the student's condition has altered in a significant way since confirmation of their Inclusion Plan and has had an impact on the student's performance at assessment
 - the agreed reasonable adjustments are not adequate to enable the student to demonstrate their achievement
 - adjustments were agreed too late to apply for this assessment
 - they are subject to circumstances beyond their control, which are unconnected to their current Inclusion Plan.
- 3.3 In some circumstances the College may undertake a Fitness to Study review with the student before agreeing to Extenuating Circumstances.

4. Applying for Extenuating Circumstances

- 4.1 Requests for consideration of Extenuating Circumstances should be submitted on the relevant form available on the RCA website to the General Manager of the relevant School or for Doctoral students, the Head of Research Programmes, or their nominee **no later than 24 hours after the assessment deadline**.
- 4.2 All requests for Extenuating Circumstances must be supported by the appropriate evidence, relevant to the situation and must cover the time period for which the student is requesting Extenuating Circumstances.
- 4.3 Evidence must be provided in English. Where evidence is not available in English, the student must seek approval from the Academic Registrar for the use of a translation service, which will be at the student's expense.

4.4 Extenuating Circumstances requests not supported by appropriate documentation may only be considered on the approval of the Academic Board for Concessions and Discipline (ABCD) or an officer nominated by ABCD.

4.4 Table A gives some examples of the circumstances and evidence required for Extenuating Circumstances consideration.

5. Review and Consideration of Extenuating Circumstances

5.1 Each Awarding Board nominates a Sub-board to consider Extenuating Circumstances requests from students of Programmes within their remit. The sub-board should consist of at least two academic staff members on an AEF contract. The Sub-board may co-opt a third member in cases where there is a conflict of interest or where a Panel of two cannot come to agreement. Any co-opted member will be appointed by the Chair of the Awarding Board.

5.2 The sub-board reports all accepted Extenuating Circumstances cases to the relevant Assessment Board or Panel. All reports submitted will only give the identity of the student for whom Extenuating Circumstances have been accepted.

5.3 Each case is different and it is important to consider every Extenuating Circumstances submission on its merits. It is unfair for students in similar circumstances to be dealt with differently. The Assessment Board or Panel should consider:

- Do the Extenuating Circumstances meet the definition of acceptable mitigating circumstances?
- Were the Extenuating Circumstances exceptional, short-term, unforeseen and unpreventable?
- What is the proximity of the events covered by the Extenuating Circumstances claim to the timing of the relevant assessment(s)/examinations?
- The suitability and validity of the evidence submitted.

5.4 On the information provided the Assessment Board or Panel will decide whether:

- to reschedule the examination/assessment
- to set an alternative piece of work
- for marginal fails, to consider the student as a pass
- no action - as there has been no evidence of the student's assessment/examination performance being affected.

5.5 If a student's assessment is recommended as a pass this must be reported to the ABCD for consideration.

5.6 Each Awarding Board (or Programme Board) must submit an annual report to ABCD, giving details of decisions made. This enables ABCD to ensure consistency of approach between the different Boards.

TABLE A - Circumstances that would normally be considered. The list is not exhaustive but for guidance			
Circumstance	Reason	Type of Evidence required	Unacceptable Grounds
Serious Physical Medical Condition	A serious personal injury, medical or psychological condition preventing attendance or completion, performance and submission of assessed work	Independent written evidence. For example, from a doctor, hospital, psychiatrist, psychologist or other qualified practitioner	Ongoing conditions (including disabilities, learning difficulties or mental health conditions). Please contact the Student Support team for advice if you have an ongoing condition. Elective medical treatment Minor illnesses or injuries (such as colds, headaches, hay fever)
	Sudden deterioration of an existing medical condition or disability	Independent written evidence from a doctor, hospital, psychiatrist, psychologist service	
Mental Health Condition	The sudden onset, or deterioration of an existing mental health condition	Independent written evidence. For example, from external support services who have been supporting you	
Bereavement	Death of a close family member (including parents, children, siblings, spouse or partner)	Independent written evidence confirming the death (usually not a family member) with their contact details provided and including a view on the closeness of the relationship to you; or Where the closeness of the relationship is evident (e.g. a close relative – a parent, sibling, or child), a death certificate or order of service Illness	

Illness	Serious illness or accident of someone close to the student	Independent written evidence. For example, from a doctor or hospital and evidence of closeness	
Trauma	Victim of a serious crime Major fire Theft of academic work, such as a practical piece of work or thesis	Independent written evidence. For example, a police crime reports, or evidence from a doctor or hospital	Minor crime Financial problems or employment difficulties Accommodation problems or house moves General domestic / family problems Assessment / Exam stress
Court Appearance	Jury Service Other required Court attendance	Letter from the Court	
Other	Disruption caused by terrorist incident or natural disaster War or political unrest in a student's home country. The student does not necessarily have to be in their home country during any unrest but may have close family caught up in the unrest or be unable to access finance to support their study in the UK	Evidence of the student's location at the time of the event Evidence from press etc	

TABLE B - Circumstances that will not be taken into account for Extenuating Circumstances

- Minor illnesses or ailments, e.g. hay fever, colds, sore throats where these are not symptoms of a more serious condition
- Examination stress or worry. Having feelings of stress or worry at such times does not necessarily mean you are unwell or have an eligible Extenuating Circumstance. If you suffer from panic or anxiety attacks, you may be eligible and should seek medical advice
- Computer, printer or other IT failure. However, theft of a computer or other relevant equipments may be an Extenuating Circumstance
- Holidays, weddings or other ceremonies, sporting fixtures, training in preparation for a sporting event, paid or unpaid employment commitments, foreseen disruptions such as moving house or booked travel arrangements
- Hangovers, ill-effects from the use of recreational drugs
- Ongoing regular caring responsibilities
- Ignorance of the dates of the assessments/deadlines for assignments
- Personal or long term health issues that have already been accommodated through a student's Inclusion Plan
- Travel issues getting to an assessment