

# Birmingham City University

## Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure Effective from 15 July 2024

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### 1. Introduction and purpose

- 1.1 As students go through the process of examination and assessment, the University recognises that there may be sudden, unforeseen and temporary circumstances which affect performance in assessment. This document sets out the process for making the University aware of these circumstances and for managing how the impact of these circumstances on your ability to perform in an assessment can be taken into consideration.
- 1.2 The intention of this Procedure is to give students a fair opportunity to show that they can reach the University's academic standards. We expect students in general to be able to cope with normal life events, to manage their workloads properly, and to expect a level of pressure around assessments.
- 1.3 You are required to attend classes, engage with studies and attempt assessments. A high level of attendance contributes significantly to academic achievement, retention, progression, and the successful completion of your course. It also contributes to the enhancement of the quality of the learning experience and the development of core skills such as teamwork and

professional communication and behaviour. In terms of assessment, this includes submitting all assessments by scheduled submission dates and attending all scheduled assessments, for example in class tests, presentations and exams.

- 1.4 You must make sure you organise your time so that you can complete your assessments by the deadline set or be prepared for your exam. You need to build in some extra time in case everything does not go according to plan. You must also back up your work in case your computer fails or you lose it.
- 1.5 You should make every effort to attend an exam or submit your coursework even if you believe your performance will be affected by extenuating circumstances. Any impact on your performance will be reviewed if you have a successful EC claim.

## **2. Application**

- 2.1 This procedure applies to all current BCU students and to all BCU students studying with collaborative partners under franchise arrangements from the 2022-23 academic year onwards.
- 2.2 This procedure only applies to students studying with collaborative partners under validation arrangements from 2022-23 if the partner has chosen to adopt the University's Academic Regulations.
- 2.3 If you are studying at a partner institution and are unsure whether this procedure applies to you, you should contact the relevant University Faculty Student Centre, who will be able to advise.
- 2.4 Note that the Procedure was updated on 21 June 2024 to reflect changes in the University's Academic Regulations. The version of the Procedure applicable prior to 21 June 2024 is available on [the University's website](#).

## **3. What are extenuating circumstances?**

- 3.1 Extenuating circumstances are personal circumstances that:
  - you could not have predicted would happen;
  - you have no control over; and
  - have seriously affected your ability to do your assessment.

## **4. Examples of extenuating circumstances**

- 4.1 The following table provides non-exhaustive examples of circumstances which are likely or unlikely to be accepted as the basis for claiming

extenuating circumstances. **The existence of circumstances must be supported by appropriate evidence** (see sections 9 and 10).

Examples of circumstances likely to be accepted	Examples of circumstances unlikely to be accepted
Serious short-term illness or injury, including mental health crises	Holidays, house moves or other events that were planned or could reasonably have been expected
Worsening of an ongoing illness or disability, including mental health conditions	Minor illness such as common colds or hay fever, unless the symptoms are particularly severe
Symptoms of an infectious disease that could be harmful if passed on to others	Assessments that are scheduled close together
Death or significant illness of a close family member or friend	Misreading the exam timetable
Unexpected caring responsibilities for a family member or dependant	Minor transport disruption
Significant personal or family crises leading to acute stress	Poor time management
Witnessing or experiencing a traumatic incident	Computer or printer failure where you should have backed-up your work
A crime which has had a substantial impact on you	Normal exam stress
Accommodation crisis such as eviction or the home becoming uninhabitable	Minor life events, unless the circumstances have had a disproportionate impact
An emergency or crisis that prevents you from attending an exam or accessing an online assessment	Any circumstances relating to assessments that took place in a previous academic year
Safeguarding concerns	A long-term health condition that we have already made reasonable adjustments for under a Disability Support Summary or occupational health assessment, unless you suffer a sudden and unexpected worsening of your symptoms, or the adjustments were put in place after your assessment
Unexpected increase in workload in employment (available to part-time students only)	Circumstances that are ongoing and for which you have already made a claim, unless there is a significant change in the circumstances and / or their impact on you

## 5. What assessment scenarios can a claim be made for?

- 5.1 An extenuating circumstances claim can be submitted in the following assessment scenarios:

- Late submission of assessment
- Impaired performance in an assessment submitted on time and/or in-person assessment taken on scheduled date, where the assessment performance is seriously impaired
- Non-submission of assessment
- Absence from an in-person assessment
- Forthcoming absence from in-person assessment, or an anticipated non-submission or late submission

## 6. What type of claims can be made, and what happens if they're successful?

- 6.1 The table below sets out the type of extenuating circumstances claims that can be made, and what the effect of a successful claim against each type will be.
- 6.2 The options are intended to provide short-term support within an academic year so that you can then evaluate your ability to continue to study in the next academic year considering your new or intensified life circumstances. The options are not designed to support you through the duration of your course, and it is unlikely that a particular set of life circumstances will fall within the definition of extenuating circumstances for more than one academic year. The options will give you more time to complete assessment but cannot replace missed teaching or other learning activities. If your circumstances are such that you are likely to miss a substantial amount of teaching/learning activities then you need to discuss this with your Course Leader or Personal Tutor as soon as possible.
- 6.3 If you make a type of claim that is not eligible, the Student Governance team will amend your claim to a type that is eligible e.g. a claim for an extension made against an exam will be amended for a claim for Review of Performance.

Type of claim	Available when...	Outcome of successful claim
<p><b>Extension</b></p> <p>An extension is always fixed at 10 working days and runs from your original assessment deadline.</p> <p>A deadline can only be extended once.</p>	<p>The assessment you are claiming for is <b>not</b> a live assessment.</p> <p>Examples of live assessments include exams, vivas and presentations.</p>	<p>Your original deadline is extended by 10 working days.</p> <p><b>You should always hand in your submission in time to meet the extended deadline, even if you have not yet received your claim</b></p>

		<p><b>decision</b> or if you think the work could be better. If you do not hand in any work by the extended deadline then you will need to make a further claim for a Review of your Performance (see below).</p> <p>If your claim is successful and you handed your work in during the extension period, any penalty for lateness will be set aside. If you apply for an extension you will be expected to meet the extended deadline and if you do not the usual penalties for lateness will apply. Lateness penalties are set out in the Academic Regulations.</p>
<p><b>Review of Performance</b></p> <p>A review of your performance in the assessment for consideration of a new attempt (called a Sit) in the next available assessment period.</p>	<p>You have missed your original assessment deadline (not including any extension) by more than 10 working days due to extenuating circumstances.</p> <p>You know you will miss an in-person assessment due to extenuating circumstances.</p> <p>You think your performance in an assessment was significantly affected due to extenuating circumstances.</p>	<p>If you failed or missed the assessment, you will automatically be given a Sit at the next opportunity.</p> <p>If you passed the assessment, the exam board will offer you an optional Sit only if there is evidence of an impact on the assessment performance (normally this is automatically set at 2% or more below your mean grade at your current academic stage). If you take the optional Sit and the mark you achieve is lower than your original mark, <b>the original mark will stand.</b></p>
<b>DSS-related repeat assessment</b>		

<p>You must ensure to claim for <b>all</b> assessment attempts you wish to repeat.</p>	<p>You have had a Disability Support Summary (DSS) put in place during the academic year and wish to attempt an assessment again with reasonable adjustments in place.</p> <p>This claim type relates to assessments you have already completed within the current academic year, for which you did not have adjustments, and is <b>not</b> available for assessments from previous academic years.</p>	<p>You will resit all assessment attempts claimed for, with relevant adjustments from your DSS put in place / taken into account.</p>
<p><b>DSS-related re-mark</b></p> <p>You must ensure to claim for <b>all</b> assessment attempts you wish to repeat.</p> <p>Re-marking work already submitted is only suitable for certain disabilities and you should speak to a Disability Adviser before applying.</p>	<p>You have had a Disability Support Summary (DSS) put in place during the academic year and want your work remarked with reasonable adjustments taken into account.</p> <p>This claim type relates to assessments you have already completed within the current academic year, for which you did not have adjustments, and is <b>not</b> available for assessments from previous academic years.</p>	<p>Work submitted for the assessment attempts claimed for will be marked with relevant adjustments from your DSS taken into account.</p>

## 7. When should I claim?

- 7.1 You should claim as soon as possible after you become aware of the circumstances affecting your assessment performance. **Do not wait to make**

**an extenuating circumstances claim for any reason**, including waiting for results or if you do not yet have all your evidence.

- 7.2 If you submit your claim more than 5 working days after the assessment deadline your claim will be considered late and you will need to explain why you were not able to make a claim sooner and submit evidence in support of your explanation. Late claims will only be accepted where the evidence in support clearly demonstrates that you could not reasonably have claimed sooner.
- 7.3 If you claim for assessments falling within a previous academic year, the claim will not be successful.

## **8. How should I claim?**

- 8.1 Claims are made from within your profile on MySRS. Once you are logged in at [mysrs.bcu.ac.uk](https://mysrs.bcu.ac.uk), click on the 'Support' tab and then the 'Extenuating Circumstances' option.
- 8.2 A separate [User Guidance document](#) is available from iCity and provides step-by-step guidance on making a claim through MySRS.
- 8.3 If you encounter technical issues in accessing or using MySRS, you should contact [mysrs@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:mysrs@bcu.ac.uk) in the first instance.
- 8.4 If you do not have access to MySRS or cannot make a claim electronically for any reason, you should contact Student Governance via [appealsandresolutions@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:appealsandresolutions@bcu.ac.uk) and you will be provided with an alternative method to make a claim.
- 8.5 **You must ensure to include within your claim all the assessments you wish to claim for.** If we issue a claim decision and you later realise you have missed assessments off your claim, you will need to submit a new claim and it may be deemed late. You are responsible for providing full details of your claim and we will not make any assumptions in respect of your intentions where information is missing.

## **9. Providing evidence in support of your claim**

- 9.1 Uploading evidence in support of an EC claim is not mandatory. However, you must note that claims that are not supported by evidence are unlikely to be successful.

- 9.2 You are responsible for obtaining and submitting all evidence you want to use to support your claim. Student Governance cannot contact third parties or obtain evidence on your behalf. Consideration of your claim will begin once you have indicated that you have uploaded all your evidence in support (including where there is no evidence) and have confirmed that your claim is ready to be considered. If you begin a claim and indicate that you intend to upload more evidence, you should upload evidence within the next 10 working days. Your claim will remain open within the system, and will not be considered, until you confirm it is ready for consideration. If you have started a claim and indicated that you intend to upload more evidence but have not done so after 10 working days, your claim will proceed to consideration and may be unsuccessful. If 10 working days will not be sufficient for you to provide your evidence, you should contact Student Governance to discuss whether additional time can be granted for you to gather your evidence.
- 9.3 If you have difficulty in obtaining evidence then you should contact Student Governance as soon as possible.
- 9.4 Evidence must be:
- genuine – Student Governance regularly check the evidence they receive to make sure it is genuine. If you submit evidence which we find is false, forged or has been tampered with in any way, your claim will be unsuccessful and we may make a referral under the Student Disciplinary Procedure (Non-Academic). We may also review previous EC claims you have made in order to verify previously submitted evidence
  - independent – we do not accept letters from relatives or friends
  - written in English – if the evidence was written in a language other than English, you must also supply an officially translated copy
  - official – evidence must be on headed paper or with an official stamp or seal of the issuing authority.
- 9.5 The evidence you provide does not have to be an original document. We will accept photocopied or scanned documents, but we may decide that we need to see the original document as well. We will accept good quality photographs of documents, but photographs of anything other than documents cannot be accepted as evidence.
- 9.6 **Photographs of injuries or illness are not appropriate and will not be considered.**



## 10. Types of evidence

- 10.1 All evidence must confirm the circumstances on which your claim is based and must clearly refer to the impact of your circumstances on your assessment preparation or performance. The two tables below set out non-exhaustive examples of acceptable evidence in support of extenuating circumstances claims; and offer guidance in respect of specific evidence types.

Circumstances	Suitable evidence
Your own illness or injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Medical letter</li><li>• Letter from Mental Health &amp; Wellbeing</li><li>• Letter from Disability Support</li></ul>
Illness or injury of a family member or friend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Medical letter</li><li>• Letter from Mental Health &amp; Wellbeing</li></ul>
Death of a family member or friend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Medical letter</li><li>• Death certificate</li><li>• Letter from Mental Health &amp; Wellbeing</li></ul>
Increase in caring responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Medical letter</li><li>• Letter from third party care provider e.g. care home or care visitor</li></ul>
Increase in employment responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Letter from employer</li></ul>
Witnessing or experiencing a traumatic incident, including a crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Medical letter</li><li>• Letter from Mental Health &amp; Wellbeing</li><li>• Police report</li></ul>
Accommodation crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Letter confirming eviction or nature of accommodation issues (with dates)</li><li>• Letter from Student Support</li></ul>
An emergency or crisis that prevents you from attending an exam or accessing an online assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Any independent evidence that confirms the circumstances and their impact on your ability to complete the assessment</li></ul>
Safeguarding concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Medical letter</li><li>• Letter from Mental Health &amp; Wellbeing</li></ul>

Type of evidence	Guidance
Medical letter	Must be from a doctor, nurse or hospital and must be written on official headed paper. The letter must say

	<p>that you are, were or will be unfit to study at the time of the assessment.</p> <p>The letter should be written at the time of the circumstances or provide a clear timeframe for when the circumstances were affecting you.</p>
Other medical documents	<p>Medical records will only be considered suitable if they clearly comment on your ability to meet the assessment deadline.</p> <p>Evidence of prescriptions (including photographs of medication) will not be considered suitable.</p>
Letter from Mental Health & Wellbeing	<p>Mental Health &amp; Wellbeing staff can provide a letter of support in any circumstances where they feel it is appropriate but are not obliged to do so (e.g. if they have had limited interaction with you and so feel unable to comment on your ability to complete assessments).</p> <p>Any letter must say that you are, were or will be unfit to study at the time of the assessment. The letter should be written at the time of the circumstances or provide a clear timeframe for when the circumstances were affecting you.</p>
Letter from Disability Support	<p>Disability Support staff can provide a letter of support in any circumstances where they feel it is appropriate but are not obliged to do so (e.g. if they have had limited interaction with you and so feel unable to comment on your ability to complete assessments).</p> <p>Any letter must say that you are, were or will be unfit to study at the time of the assessment.</p>
Death certificate	<p>We will consider any assessment falling within one month of the death as being affected. If any assessment falls more than a month after the death, you will also need to provide a medical letter in support of your claim. The letter should explain the effects of the bereavement on your ability to study.</p> <p>If you cannot obtain a death certificate (or do not wish to do) then a medical letter explaining the effects of the bereavement on your ability to study is likely to be sufficient.</p>

Letter from employer	Must be written on official headed paper and must state that there has been an increase in your workload which you could not reasonably have expected (part-time students only).
Disability Support Summary	<p>Must be provided in support of any DSS-related claim (repeat or remark).</p> <p>If your DSS is delayed then a letter from Mental Health &amp; Wellbeing or Disability Support confirming that a DSS is being put in place is likely to be sufficient.</p>
Police report	<p>Should provide details of the incident reported. We cannot accept crime reference numbers alone as evidence of a crime having taken place.</p> <p>If you cannot obtain a police report then a medical letter explaining the effects of the incident on your ability to study is likely to be sufficient.</p>
Letter of support from academic staff	<p>Can only be accepted where the letter comments on the impact of missing a particular section of academic work on your ability to complete the assessment (e.g. if you missed a visit upon which a report is based).</p> <p>Any claim based on a tutor letter alone is unlikely to be successful.</p>

## 11. When will I receive a decision on my claim?

- 11.1 Once your claim and all your evidence are submitted on MySRS it usually takes up to five working days for Student Governance to confirm a decision on your claim.
- 11.2 If you claim close to or after your assessment deadline, then it is likely a claim decision will not be issued until after the deadline has passed. If your original deadline has passed and you have sought an extension, you should work towards the extended deadline and ensure to meet the extended deadline even if you have not received a claim decision.
- 11.3 Once a decision is entered against your claim within MySRS, you will receive an email notification and you must log in to MySRS to access the decision.
- 11.4 Details of all claim decisions are available to your School's administrative team through MySRS reports. Only details of the decisions are shared as the circumstances on which a claim is based are confidential to you. Where

necessary, the School administrative team will ensure that claim decisions are provided to the relevant exam board so that impact on your performance can be assessed.

## **12. What happens if my claim is unsuccessful?**

- 12.1 If your claim is unsuccessful the claim decision will include the reasons.
- 12.2 If you do not understand the claim decision or wish to seek guidance on how you can provide more evidence, you should contact the Student Governance staff member who issued your decision in the first instance. The staff member can explain the decision and offer guidance on pursuing your claim further.
- 12.3 There are two stages to pursuing an extenuating circumstances claim further after an unsuccessful claim decision: query and appeal.

### **12.4 *Raising a query***

- 12.4.1 Raising a query means providing more evidence or information that will allow the Student Governance staff member to consider your claim further. For example, you may be able to obtain further evidence that demonstrates your circumstances more clearly; or you may have mistakenly provided incorrect information in your initial claim, which you are able to correct at the query stage.
- 12.4.2 You can raise a query against an unsuccessful claim decision by submitting further evidence through the MySRS claims system. We will treat the query as being raised on the day we receive your further evidence, not the day you first say you want to query the decision. You must raise a query within 10 working days of your claim decision being issued.
- 12.4.3 When we receive the further evidence from you we will look again at your claim and see if a different decision can be reached. We will confirm the previous decision, or issue a revised decision, within 10 working days.

### **12.5 Making an appeal**

- 12.5.1 If you wish to pursue your claim after receiving an unsuccessful query decision, you should submit a formal academic appeal.
- 12.5.2 Academic Appeals are governed by the Academic Appeals Procedure. The Procedure, relevant forms and guidance on making an appeal is available [on iCity](#).

### 13. Key documents and sources of support

13.1 Documents relevant to the Extenuating Circumstances Procedure include:

- [MySRS User Guidance](#)
- [Academic Regulations](#)
- [Student Attendance and Engagement Policy](#)
- [Assessment and Feedback Policy](#)
- [Academic Appeals Procedure](#)

13.2 Sources of support available to you when making a claim include:

- [BCU Students' Union Advice Centre](#)
- [Student Governance](#)
- [Mental Health and Wellbeing](#)
- [Disability Support](#)
- [Money and Childcare Advice](#)

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