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# Academic Services

## MENU

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## UNNC Extenuating Circumstances Procedure

This procedure is part of the University's [Policy on Circumstances Affecting Students' Ability to Study and Complete Assessments](#), which should be read in conjunction with this document.

This procedure is applicable to claims regarding study and assessments within the 2020/21 academic session and beyond.

Decisions regarding Extenuating Circumstances are made by Extenuating Circumstances Panel on behalf of the Quality and Standards Committee through School Examination Boards.

### 1. Parameters of the procedure

This procedure should be used to address:

- absence from an examination/assessment or non-submission of coursework
- late submission of e-exam
- requests for extensions to deadlines for submission of written assignments
- requests for extensions to deadlines for submission of a written assignment for which the student has already used the procedure for an extension on the basis of a Support Plan (previously referred to as an ARF/DRF)
- claims of adversely impacted performance during an assessment
- requests for an extension to the date set for / a further annual review (PGR students only)
- cases where a student has not had appropriate adjustment in the current academic session due to a late diagnosis of a disability or long-term medical condition

This procedure should not be used for absence from compulsory teaching or laboratory sessions that are not part of a formal assessment.

Schools/Departments should publicise local procedures for students to follow in respect of absence from compulsory teaching or laboratory sessions.

### 2. Advice and support

Advice and support are available from a number of sources and students are encouraged to engage with support services for advice:

- [Personal Tutor](#)
- [School/Department Senior Tutor](#)
- [Faculty Senior Tutor](#)
- [Support and Wellbeing Officer](#)
- [Disability Support Services](#)
- [Counselling Service](#)

Students are responsible for ensuring that they inform the University of any circumstances that they consider are affecting their ability to study and/or undertake assessments as early as possible. With early warning of a problem, the University can provide appropriate support. Students should be aware that the University cannot respond to a student's circumstances if they remain unaware of relevant information.

### 3. Acceptable circumstances

#### Relevant Information

[Policy on circumstances affecting students' ability to study and complete assessments](#)

[Guidance on Acceptable Circumstances and Evidence \(EC Procedure\)](#)

[COVID-19 Extenuating Circumstances Exceptional Regulations](#)

[Extenuating Circumstances Form](#)

[Self-Certification Form](#)

[Self-Certification Policy](#)

[UNNC Extenuating Circumstances Procedure prior to 30 Nov 2020](#)

1. In general terms, this procedure is intended to support students with exceptional, unforeseeable (in that the student could not reasonably have been expected to avoid them), short-term circumstances affecting their ability to study or take assessments or students who have had a late diagnosis of a disability or long-term medical condition.
2. Further information about the sort of circumstances covered by this procedure can be found in the [Guidance on Circumstances and Evidence](#). The circumstances must;
  - be out of the student's control – the student could not have prevented them.
  - have had an impact – they must have had a demonstrably negative impact on the student's ability to study or to undertake an assessment.
  - the timing of the circumstances must be relevant to the claimed impact.
3. As general guidance an illness/ailment that does not require medical treatment or does not lead to a student being bedridden or will not cause a significant risk to others will not be covered by this procedure.
4. Preparing for and taking assessments can be a demanding time both physically and psychologically and feeling 'below par' is a natural and common experience for many students. Students who feel 'below par' or generally unwell whilst preparing for and/or engaging in an assessment or assessments should make reasonable efforts to comply with the assessment requirements(s) as normal.
5. The typical symptoms associated with 'exam stress' (eg anxiety, sleeping disturbances, feeling nauseous etc) are not considered to be good reasons for missing or underperforming in an assessment and are not, therefore, grounds for an extenuating circumstances claim.
6. The procedure should be used sparingly by students to address circumstances for which there is clear evidence of impact.

## 4. Ongoing circumstances

1. Where a student has had extenuating circumstances accepted for one period but continues to be affected by or has a recurrence of the same circumstances, they should seek medical/other advice. If necessary, they should either refer to the [Policy on Long Term Conditions or Disabilities affecting the Ability to Study and/or Comply with Assessment Requirements](#) so that appropriate support for study or individual arrangements for examinations can be put in place or discuss with their School the possibility of [voluntarily interrupting their studies](#) until the circumstances have been resolved. This does not preclude the possibility of accepting a claim for a specific event such as an operation as well as a claim for prior symptoms or after effects. Accommodations identified by Disability/Academic Support for disabilities or long-term medical conditions are intended to make full adjustment for the condition/disability so no further adjustment or consideration would be appropriate.
2. Students may not submit the same extenuating circumstances covering more than one semester except where they have accessed appropriate support to manage the circumstances but there is an unexpected acute episode at a particularly significant time.
3. Where the circumstances are external to the student and extend over more than one semester, such as chronic illness of a relative, it may be appropriate to accept the same circumstances for a longer period if it is not appropriate for the student to voluntarily interrupt their studies. In such circumstances the student must discuss the situation with their School/Department and submit an extenuating circumstances form each semester to ensure that appropriate account is taken of the circumstances and appropriate support can be offered to the student.
4. Where a student has suffered from a series of discrete short-term illnesses resulting in extenuating circumstances claims, a meeting will be arranged with the Personal Tutor and Faculty Senior Tutor (or other appropriate staff member) to consider the support options available, including the possibility of [a voluntary interruption to study](#).

## 5. Meeting coursework deadlines

1. A student who through short-term circumstances is unable to meet a coursework deadline should submit an Extenuating Circumstances form with appropriate evidence by the deadlines outlined at section 9.
2. Students who have a Support Plan (formerly known as an ARF or DRF) and wish to make an extension request on the basis of the disability/long-

term condition covered by the Support Plan should follow the extension request procedure set out on the UNNC [Disability Support webpages](#).

3. Where a student has submitted an extenuating circumstances claim but has not had a response to indicate whether an extension is being granted, the student should submit whatever work they have completed at the time of the deadline such that, if necessary, it can form the assessment. Having submitted the work done to date, students should continue working in order that, should an extension be granted (which would be from the original submission date), they are able to take full advantage of any extra time allowed.

4. A student who has not submitted an acceptable claim for extenuating circumstances prior to a coursework deadline and misses that deadline will be managed according to the policy governing [late submission of coursework](#).

5. Where a student receives an extension to a deadline as a result of a claim, they should be informed of any change to the timescale for the return of coursework and associated feedback in accordance with the [Policy on Feedback to Students](#).

## 6. Attending timetabled examinations and assessments

1. A student who considers that they are not fit enough to attend a timetabled examination or a student who is unwell during a scheduled examination such that they believe that their performance has been affected should submit an extenuating circumstances claim in accordance with the time limits defined in paragraph 9.

2. A student who is absent from an examination due to extenuating circumstances and who has their claim approved will be required to undertake the examination at the next scheduled time the examination is run, without penalty.

3. A student who has not submitted an acceptable extenuating circumstances claim for a scheduled examination that they do not attend will receive a mark of zero.

4. All claims should be supported by evidence as detailed in the [Guidance on Acceptable Circumstances and Evidence](#).

## 7. Disruption to assessments

1. In cases where the assessment process has in some way been disrupted for all students (eg a problem with an examination paper) appropriate adjustments may be made to the outcomes for the affected cohort, including potentially to marks, by following the University's normal [moderation and marks adjustment processes](#). In such circumstances the student should not be required to submit a claim for extenuating circumstances.

2. Please also refer to [Penalties for the Late Submission of Assessed Coursework](#) for guidance as to appropriate consideration of claims in the event of failure of an online submission mechanism.

3. Please also refer to [Assessment Regulations: e-exams](#) for guidance as to appropriate consideration of claims in the event of late submission of or technical difficulties with e-exams.

4. In extreme cases, Schools may seek to offer a blanket EC to an entire cohort, offering a reassessment at the first opportunity. Such requests should be treated, via Academic Services Office, under the [QSC procedure](#) for cases outside of regulations.

## 8. Submission of claims and evidence

1. Any student wishing their circumstances to be considered under this procedure should submit an Extenuating Circumstances form, accompanied by appropriate evidence of impact, by the timescales given at section 9 below. Only in exceptional circumstances may a form be submitted by another party.

2. Claims accompanied by appropriate evidence should be submitted via BPM on Student Portal. Information regarding how to submit a claim form can be found on the [Hub web pages](#). As far as is practicably possible, students are encouraged to discuss their claim with their Personal Tutor,

Senior Tutor, Faculty Senior Tutor or other appropriate staff member, prior to submission.

In exceptional circumstances, where a student is prevented from attending an examination they may use self-certification if they are unable to provide any other form of evidence. Students should check the [Examination Self-Certification Policy](#) to see if their circumstances and the missed assessment are eligible for self-certification. Students should be aware that not all types of assessment are eligible for self-certification. Details can be found in the [Examination Self-Certification Policy](#). The only potential outcome of a self-certificated absence claim is a further attempt. Normally, the further attempt will be in the format of an examination at the next scheduled opportunity, however, a different form of re-assessment to assess whether the learning outcomes are achieved, as determined by the School/Department, may be recommended if the same or equivalent of the original is no longer possible.

3. Claims will be administered by Faculty Office and considered by Extenuating Circumstance Panel. Claims relating to the Examination Self-Certification Policy will be considered in the first instance by Faculty Office. Faculty Offices have the authority to reject claims which are ineligible for self-certification and will ensure the relevant Extenuating Circumstances Panel is notified of the outcome of the claim. Input from the relevant EC Panel will be sought on the reassessment opportunity or if the eligibility of the claim is unclear, as required.

4. Claims submitted without evidence or valid self-certification and without notification of intention to submit evidence at a later date will be rejected by Faculty Offices without consideration.

## 9. Timescales

1. The completed extenuating circumstances form should be returned, as in Section 8.2 above, as soon as possible and in accordance with the following time limits:

**Coursework: Claims must be submitted before the coursework deadline.**

**Timetabled examinations/assessments: Claims must be submitted prior to, or within seven days of, the examination.**

2. Supporting evidence: All evidence which the student wishes to use to support the claim should be submitted with the extenuating circumstances form. Where evidence is not available at the time of submission of the form, it must be submitted within fourteen days of the coursework deadline or examination. In circumstances where this will not be possible, the student may request an extension of time in which to submit evidence. Any extension of the deadline will be confirmed to the student in writing. Students wishing to self-certify their absence from an examination (see section 8.2) should indicate this using the relevant box on the claim form.

3. Where the circumstances arise extremely close to the deadline/examination (e.g. on the same or previous day), it may not be possible for the School to consider the claim before the relevant deadline or examination or for the student to acquire the necessary evidence. In the case of an examination the student must make their own decision as to whether to miss the examination, and in the case of a coursework deadline the student should submit any work that they have done by the time of the deadline. If the claim is not subsequently approved they will receive a mark of zero for the relevant examination (if they have not attended) or the submitted coursework will be marked.

4. Extenuating Circumstances Panels are entitled to reject automatically and without consideration all extenuating circumstances claims that are submitted after the deadlines set out at 9.1 or claims for which evidence is not supplied in accordance with the deadlines set out at 9.2. This authority may be delegated to Faculty Offices processing the claims on the Extenuating Circumstances Panel's behalf.

5. The only exception to these timescales is where the student provides compelling evidence that circumstances or illness prevented them from submitting the form on time. Where such an exception is made, the student's claim will be considered under this policy without prejudice.

6. Claims may only be submitted before a progression or classification Board of Examiners has reached a decision on a student's results. After a Board of Examiners has confirmed its decision in relation to a student's results, the [Academic Appeal procedure](#) should be followed. The Academic Appeal submitted by the student will need to demonstrate that new evidence was not, and could not have been, made available to the Board of Examiners at the time of its original decision. Any matters which could have been raised before the meeting of the Board, but, without good reason, were not raised, will not be considered in the event of an Appeal.

7. Where a student has not had appropriate adjustment in the current session for a late diagnosis they should submit a claim under the Extenuating Circumstances procedure as soon as the diagnosis is confirmed. Where the condition is not covered by the Equality Act 2010, extenuating circumstances claims will be subject to the timescales provided

for above. If the student's condition is covered by the Equality Act 2010, an Extenuating Circumstances Panel must consider claims submitted before a Board of Examiners has reached a decision on the student's results. The University will also consider the circumstances if an Academic Appeal is submitted within one month of the notification of a progression or award decision. Please refer to the [Policy on Long-term Conditions or Disabilities to Study and/or Comply with Assessment Requirements](#).

## 10. Extenuating Circumstances Panels

1. The relevant Faculty Management Committee or equivalent is asked to decide and review on annual basis regarding the setting and level of Extenuating Circumstances Panel for the Faculty. The Faculty may decide to establish a Faculty Level or School/Department Level Extenuating Circumstances Panel to consider the Extenuating Circumstances Claims. The Faculty should report to the setting, membership and any updates of the Extenuating Circumstances Panel(s) to the Campus Teaching Committee annually. Extenuating Circumstances claims are initially considered by an Extenuating Circumstances Panel (Faculty or School/Department Level based on the Faculty arrangement), which makes specific recommendations to the relevant Board of Examiners based on the evidence before them. The recommendations available are listed in the [Guidance on Recommendations for Extenuating Circumstances Panels](#).

Claims should be considered in the first instance by the student's home Faculty/School/Department Extenuating Circumstances Panel. The home Faculty Extenuating Circumstances Panel has responsibility for determining if the claim is approved. If the claim is approved and relates to an assignment/examination owned by another Faculty/School/Department, the appropriate recommendation should be reached in conjunction with the other Faculty/School/Department

2. Terms of reference of Extenuating Circumstances Panels

i. An Extenuating Circumstances Panel acts as a sub-Committee of relevant Board(s) of Examiners.

ii. Each Faculty Management Committee or equivalent should decide and review on annual basis regarding the setting and level of Extenuating Circumstances Panel for the Faculty. The Faculty may decide to establish a Faculty Level or School/Department Level Extenuating Circumstances Panel to consider the Extenuating Circumstances Claims. The Panel should assess the validity of claims and recommend appropriate outcomes.

iii. In addition to the terms of reference outlined in these regulations, Extenuating Circumstances Panels will take due account of any requirements from relevant professional or regulatory bodies which govern the registration of students entering a relevant profession.

iv. For Faculty opt to Faculty Level Extenuating Circumstances Panel, each Extenuating Circumstances Panel shall comprise a minimum of 3 members of School/Departmental staff from the same faculty and shall be constituted as follows:

A Chair: usually a Faculty Director of Teaching or Faculty Senior Tutor or Equivalent Faculty Teaching & Learning/Welfare Senior Officer or nominees agreed by Faculty Management

Department/School Senior Tutor(s) Senior Faculty Welfare/Teaching & Learning Officer (e.g. Faculty Senior Tutor, Faculty Director of Teaching)

Other members may include:

Directors of Programmes or nominees

Exam Officers

Module Conveners

Co-opted members as deemed necessary by the Chair

The Panel will be deemed to be quorate provided the Chair and at least 2 other members are present.

The Panel will be supported by a note-taker (usually from Faculty Office) who is not part of the Panel.

Faculty Senior Tutor should be in attendance to provide advice on student cases, if the Faculty Senior Tutor is not part of the Panel.

For Faculty opt to School/Department Level Extenuating Circumstances Panels, each Extenuating Circumstances Panel shall comprise a minimum of 3 members of School/Departmental staff and shall be constituted as follows:

A Chair: usually an Examinations Officer

Senior Tutor(s)

Other members may include:

Directors of Programmes or nominees

Module Conveners

Co-opted members as deemed necessary by the Chair

The Panel will be deemed to be quorate provided the Chair and at least 2 other members are present.

The Panel will be supported by a note-taker (usually from Faculty Office) who is not part of the Panel.

Faculty Senior Tutor should be in attendance to provide advice on student cases but are not part of the Panel.

v. The role of the Chair is to ensure that the Board carries out its responsibilities in a fair, transparent and impartial manner and in accordance with relevant University and programme regulations and procedures. The Chair ensures that members have the opportunity to contribute to discussions and that business is conducted collegially.

vi. The Panel may consult and/or take advice from other professional services.

vii. Decisions of each Extenuating Circumstances Panel shall be made in accordance with relevant University and programme regulations.

viii. For the consideration of requests for an extension to a submission deadline(s) it is not necessary for a full Panel to be convened. The case may be reviewed by a Panel member or members in order that the decision is made promptly. If the decision relates to a module owned by another Faculty/School/Department, the decision should be made in conjunction with the relevant Extenuating Circumstance Panel. The recommendations made by Panel members should be reported at the next meeting of the full Panel. Other time-critical decisions may be made by Chair's action and reported to the next meeting of the full Panel.

ix. Extenuating Circumstances Panels shall be responsible for scheduling their own regular meetings to be held at least once prior to each meeting of the relevant Boards of Examiners. Each Extenuating Circumstances Panel may decide to schedule more regular meetings or arrange extraordinary meetings when necessary.

x. Members of Extenuating Circumstances Panels who are also the Personal Tutor of a student making a claim should refrain from making a decision in connection with that request. They may, however, provide the student with a supporting statement to be included as evidence, if appropriate.

xi. All Extenuating Circumstances Panels are required to keep formal records of their proceedings. The purpose of the records is to document decisions, to summarise any discussion relevant to those decisions (where this is required to give a context or rationale for the decision, or to establish precedents), and to capture for further consideration any areas of discussion or requirements for future action.

### 3. The Board of Examiners

Boards of Examiners shall consider recommendations from Extenuating Circumstances Panels before making a final determination of the student's classification or progression decision arising from the result, subject to the provisions of the Regulations for Undergraduate, Taught Masters, Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate certificate courses.

When a student has experienced circumstances affecting their ability to study/take assessments in their final year of study, a Board of Examiners may accept a recommendation from an Extenuating Circumstances panel and make a case to QSC to revisit performance in earlier years for the purposes of recommending a degree classification outside regulations. This recommendation should only be used in exceptional circumstances for cases where there is no prospect of the student undertaking first attempts within a reasonable period of time, for example, in the case of chronic or terminal illness of the student or the dependent of a student.

In all cases the Board of Examiners must be assured that overall programme learning outcomes have been met before implementing a recommendation by the Extenuating Circumstances Panel.

## 11. Outcomes

1. Extenuating Circumstances Panel should arrange for Faculty Office to inform the student of the outcome of claims in writing including the information in the appropriate template letter normally within 10 working days of the decision of the Panel.

2. Notwithstanding the Extenuating Circumstances Panel's authority to apply one of the outcomes listed in the [Guidance on Recommendations for Extenuating Circumstances Panels](#), where a claim has been accepted as being with good cause and where the affected assessment forms more than the equivalent of 5 credits of assessment, the student may request to take

the assessment again in order to gain a fully representative mark. Such requests should be made within one month of the outcome of the assessment being made known to the student and Schools should not unreasonably refuse such requests. Any mark gained as a result of such an assessment would be treated as a replacement for the affected assessment and be full mitigation of the circumstances, such that no further consideration of the circumstances should be necessary at an Examination Board.

## 12. Dissatisfaction following the outcome of a claim of extenuating circumstances

1. A student who is dissatisfied with the outcome of an Extenuating Circumstances claim should first discuss the matter with the Faculty Office responsible for issuing the outcome.

2. New evidence

i. **If new evidence is available before the relevant progression or classification Examination Board has met, it should first be submitted for consideration by the Extenuating Circumstances Panel with an explanation as to why the student could not submit it at the time of making the original claim.** It will be considered by the Extenuating Circumstances Panel in line with the time limits on submission of claims set out in this policy. If an Academic Appeal against the outcome of a claim contains new evidence not previously considered by the Extenuating Circumstances Panel and is made before an Examination Board has met, the Academic Appeal will be closed and the student advised accordingly.

ii. If new evidence becomes available after the relevant Examination Board has met, a student will need to submit an Academic Appeal against the progression or classification decision as outlined at 9.6.

**3. A student may appeal against the outcome of an Extenuating Circumstances claim using the [Academic Appeals procedure](#). Appeals will only be accepted if submitted within one calendar month of the student receiving notification of the decision against which they wish to appeal.**

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199 Taikang East Road, Ningbo, 315100, China  
T. +86(0)574 8818 0000 F. +86(0)574 8818 9372



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浙ICP备12026790号  浙公网安备 33021202001714号

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