



**BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY**

**Document Administration**

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## Table of Contents

Section	Page
Introduction	3
Providing False or Misleading Information	4
Panel Constitution and Authority	4
Extenuating Circumstances and Mitigation	4
- Application	4
- Notification of Outcome	7
Collaborative Provision	7



## Introduction

The University policy on assessment submission on or before published hand-in dates is strictly applied. However, from time to time unforeseen events, such as illness, may arise preventing students from completing assessments within the time allowed or impact adversely on the quality of the assessment submitted. Such events are referred to as extenuating circumstances. This Code of Practice encompasses the processes of application for extenuating circumstances.

It follows the precepts and guidance contained in the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK Quality Code for Higher Education, specifically *Chapter B6 – Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning [2013] (2015)*.

Reference should also be made to:

- Code of Practice for the Conduct of Boards of Examiners
- Code of Practice for the Assessment of Students
- Code of Practice on Intercalation
- Code of Practice for Academic Misconduct
- Regulations appropriate to programme

There may be occasion during a student's academic journey when circumstances arise that prevent timely submission of assessed work or attendance of examinations, or impact on assessment performance. Such extenuating circumstances are defined as serious adverse circumstances of limited duration which could not reasonably have been foreseen. The criteria are defined as:

*a. Serious adverse circumstance.* The events described should be sufficiently serious to mean that it would not be reasonable to expect a student to complete an assignment by the published hand-in date. Minor ailments and mishaps are not likely to meet this criterion.

*b. Limited duration.* There is an expectation that the usual pattern of study will be resumed after a relatively short period. In more serious cases, where there is likely to be prolonged interruption of normal activity, intercalation (suspension, interruption) of studies may be appropriate until the circumstances have been resolved. Chronic illness and disability are not treated as extenuating circumstances, unless newly diagnosed or in an acute phase.

*c. Not reasonably have been foreseen.* Assignment submission dates are normally published well in advance. There is, therefore, an expectation that students exercise due foresight in organising workload.

If such extenuating circumstances arise, students may apply for their consideration, the process and procedure for which are provided within this Code of Practice.

The University encourages students to try to undertake an assessment or hand in a piece of assessed work, wherever possible, rather than miss an assessment. If the student then feels that they have not performed as well as they might due to extenuating circumstances, this can be considered. It is important that students



are able to manage minor illness and difficult or distressing life events at the same time as pursuing their programme of study (just as they will have to do in the work-place).

### **Providing False or Misleading Information**

Students seeking to gain an advantage or benefit through application for consideration of extenuating circumstance, mitigation or extension for submission of assessed work through providing false or misleading information are liable to action being taken against them under the University Code of Practice on Academic Misconduct.

### **PANEL CONSTITUTION AND AUTHORITY**

All applications for extenuating circumstances are considered by a Panel which will normally be comprised of:

- a. a Head of School, or a nominated representative;
- b. Academic representative(s), not exceeding two, who do not have a direct connection to cases under consideration; or
- c. Representative of QASA (Chair).

The Panel has the authority to make one of the following decisions on each case presented, either to:

- a. support the application, and make recommendation to the Module Board of Examiners;
- b. reject the application; or
- c. defer decision pending further evidence.

Where a unanimous decision cannot be reached then a majority decision can be taken; the Chair in this instance would hold the casting vote.

### **EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCE AND MITIGATION**

#### **Application**

1. Students who wish to inform the University of circumstances which they feel may have affected their performance in assessment or led to them being absent from an examination or other assessment should make an application for consideration of extenuating circumstances.



2. Exceptionally, where a student has been unable to submit an assignment on time and was unable to request an extension in advance they may apply for extenuating circumstances to be taken into account.

#### Commonly accepted grounds

The following is a non-exhaustive list of **commonly accepted grounds**, which nevertheless allow the University to use their discretion based on the given facts of a particular case within a broad set of criteria. Such circumstances are likely to have impacted on the assessment preparation/actual attendance or submission in a way which could not be remedied in the time available prior to the actual attempt at assessment:

- bereavement – death of close relative/significant other. Panels should be aware that what might be considered ‘close’ can vary considerably and a degree of flexibility might be needed. The effect that bereavement might have on an individual can also vary depending on individual circumstances.
- serious short-term illness or accident (of a nature which in an employment context would have led to an absence on sick leave)
- evidence of a long-term health condition worsening
- other significant/exceptional factors for which there is evidence of stress caused. This could include religious/cultural issues and their impact on individuals and families

#### Grounds which are unlikely to be accepted

The following is a non-exhaustive list of grounds **unlikely to be accepted** as extenuating circumstances:

- alleged statement of a medical condition without reasonable evidence (medical or otherwise) to support
- alleged medical circumstances outside the relevant assessment period for which extenuating circumstances have been applied for
- alleged medical condition supported by ‘retrospective’ medical evidence, that is, evidence which is not contemporaneous, i.e. in existence at the same time as the illness, e.g. a Doctor’s note which states that the student was seen after the illness had occurred and declared they had been ill previously. If a student is genuinely unable to visit a Doctor at the same time as the illness, preferably on the first day, then every effort should be made to speak to the Doctor so that there is a record which can be used as evidence. If a student sees the Doctor whilst their illness is still verifiable, then this should be accepted. What may not be acceptable is a Doctor’s note saying that a student tells them that they were ill 3 weeks before, as this is unverifiable.
- if there is a reasonable case that circumstances cited were foreseeable or preventable
- minor illness or ailment which in a work situation would be unlikely to lead to absence from work
- holidays
- normal financial pressures, however, issues of an exceptional nature can be accepted at the discretion of the Panel
- claims that students were unaware of examination/submission deadlines



- transport difficulties, unless unforeseeable and unpreventable, or failure to make alternative travel plans when disruptions were known about in advance
  - computer/printer failure/losing work not backed up on computer disk
  - poor time management
  - poor practice e.g. losing work not backed up on a computer disk
  - normal work commitments on behalf of an employer, however, exceptional or unexpected/unplanned issues can be accepted at the discretion of the Panel
  - late disclosure of circumstances on the basis that the student 'felt unable/did not feel comfortable' confiding in a staff member. The University encourages students to confide in a personal tutor or other staff member at the appropriate time. All disclosures made by students are treated in confidence and it is possible for statements to be made and kept in a sealed envelope. This reflects the view that students should take the consequences of their actions (if they decide not to disclose originally but then change their mind) and encourages a more professional approach to their work in preparation for later life and responsibility for their choices.
3. Applications must be submitted on the appropriate University form and must be supported by corroborating evidence which can include:
- a. Medical evidence e.g. a letter from a doctor, nurse or other professional practitioner, confirmation of appointment, prescription, a completed Medical/Professional Practitioner Support Note, etc.
  - b. Supporting statement(s) from Academic Coordinator and/or tutor
  - c. Other verifiable evidence e.g. police incident/crime number.
4. Application for consideration of extenuating circumstances should normally be made no later than 7 days after the assessment hand-in date. Exceptionally, where a student has been unable to submit an application for extenuating circumstances on time, they may be able to submit a late application provided there is solid evidence for a very good reason for their not disclosing the extenuating circumstances in a timely manner. More information can be found on the Code of Practice for Academic Appeals.
5. On application students may request one, or a combination of the following outcomes:
- a. The existing grade for an assignment is set aside and a fresh attempt is allowed. It should be noted that this may result in the award of a lower grade as it will be the grade for the fresh attempt that is entered into the student's record
  - b. A failing grade for the module is disregarded and a fresh attempt for all or part of the overall assessment strategy is allowed;
  - c. Consideration of the circumstances is taken into account together with the student's overall mark profile in determining his/her degree classification.



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6. Applications must be submitted to the administration team, unless advised otherwise by the Registrar.
7. The Board of Examiners will be advised by the Registrar or the Registrar's nominated representative.
8. All applications are treated by the University on a need-to-know basis.

#### **Notification of Outcome**

9. The student and appropriate Academic Coordinator will normally be notified in writing within two working days of the Panel's decision.
10. Where the Panel supports the application the decision of outcome and recommendation will be passed to the Module Board of Examiners.
11. Where applications are deferred pending further evidence, the student will be given a date of submission for further evidence. If no further evidence is provided by the given date the case will be returned to the next available Panel where a default decision of 'reject' will be recorded.
12. Where applications are rejected, the original mark for the assignment(s) will stand or a mark of zero will be recorded for non-attendance of an exam or other assessment, or for non-submission of the assignment(s).

#### **COLLABORATIVE PROVISION**

13. To be applied for all provision involving BGU students wherever they are based (including 'franchised' provision); recommended for all other collaborative provision also as per the Memoranda of Cooperation in force from time to time