



University
Centre
Somerset

Part of Bridgwater & Taunton College

HIGHER EDUCATION

EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES POLICY

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of the Higher Education Extenuating Circumstances policy is to provide Higher Education students with the ability to apply for additional time to submit their work due to circumstances that are beyond their control.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

2.1 The objective of the policy is to:

- Provide students with a range of extensions that best meet their needs
- Provide University Centre Somerset with sufficient information to support the student with their studies
- Ensure a fair and transparent approach to agreeing extensions

3. SCOPE

3.1 This Extenuating Circumstances policy applies to students studying on taught programmes that lead to an Oxford Brookes University, The Open University or Pearson Higher National award studied at University Centre Somerset.

3.2 University of Plymouth students will follow the University of Plymouth Extenuating Circumstances policy which can be found on their website: [Student regulations, policies and procedures - University of Plymouth](#).

3.3 Please note that the University of the West of England Bristol, (UWE) do not allow applications for Extenuating Circumstances. Their Academic Regulations allow for late submission. For details, please refer directly to the UWE Academic Regulations on their website: [Policies - Structure and governance | UWE Bristol](#)).

3.4 The criteria University Centre Somerset considers to be an Extenuating Circumstance (EC) is as follows:

- Any personal circumstances that are out of the control of the student.
- Any personal circumstances that the student could not reasonably have prevented or accommodated.
- Any personal circumstances that have had a significant and demonstratively negative effect on the student's ability to study or undertake an assessment(s).

3.5 Long-Term Health Conditions

Long-Term Health Conditions (LTHC) should be discussed and recorded between a student and their Course Leader on the LTHC nomination form to ensure any reasonable adjustments are put into place (with the approval of the External Examiner) with regards to teaching and assessment. The completed form should be provided to the HE Team (he@btc.ac.uk) with evidence to support it. Examples of accepted evidence include correspondence from medical practitioner, diagnosis letter etc.

A long-term health condition is a mental or physical condition that

- is persistent, typically lasting for more than three months and is often life-long
- cannot be resolved in a short time, or which will recur regardless of action, or which needs to be managed on a long-term basis
- may require students to seek help with some activities but is not otherwise disabling
- can be managed but can 'flare-up'

If a student experience a flare-up of the condition affecting their ability to attend or complete an assessment, they should submit an extenuating circumstances claim for the specific assessment(s), detailing how the flare-up is affecting their ability to complete the assessment(s). The HE Team will already hold the evidence relating to their LTHC, students with approved LTHC will not need to submit evidence if they apply for a Type C deadline extension which is related to their Long-Term Health Condition. However, they will need to state that the LTHC is their reason for applying. The link to the extenuating circumstances application form can be requested by emailing the HE Team at he@btc.ac.uk.

3.6 Fitness to Study

Reference should be made the UCS HE Admissions Policy where the UCS approach to a student's fitness to study is explained. The UCS HE Admissions Policy can be found on the UCS Website.

<https://www.somerset.ac.uk/about/policies-regulations/university-centre-somerset/>

4. DIFFERENT TYPES OF ASSESSMENT DEADLINES

4.1. Extenuating Circumstances can be used for different assessment types which have been placed into 3 broad categories:

a) **Deadline assessments (Coursework)** – assessments not taken under controlled and timed conditions such as essays, assignments and placements.

b) **Non – examined event assessments** - assessments taken under controlled and timed conditions such as tests and presentations (but not formal examinations which are covered below)

c) **Examined event assessments (Exams)** – formally examined assessments taken under controlled and timed conditions, such as exams.

4.2. There are four types of application a student can make under this policy, as follows:

a) **Type A** - an extension of 24 hours: for **'deadline' (coursework) assessments only**. Students must provide a valid reason as detailed in section 5.4 however no evidence is required. The reason provided by the student must detail how the circumstances are affecting their ability to complete/submit the assignment.

b) **Type B** - an extension of up to 5 working days for **'deadline' and non-examined 'event' assessments**. Students must provide a valid reason as detailed in section 6.3, however no evidence is required. The reason provided by the student must detail how the circumstances are affecting their ability to complete/submit the assignment.

c) **Type C** - an extension beyond 5 working days for **'deadline' and non-examined 'event' assessments**. Students must provide a valid reason as detailed in section 7.6 and applications must be supported by evidence. The reason provided by the student must detail how the circumstances are affecting their ability to complete/submit the assignment.

d) **Type D** - a resit of an **examined event assessment** such as a formal written examination (or a retake of the module if the affected event assessment was a resit). A valid application would give students the opportunity to sit the exam uncapped at the next resit opportunity, subject to approval from the relevant Award Board. Please see section 8 for details.

4.3 All applications will be considered by the Extenuating Circumstances Panel which will meet as needed, typically twice a week. The panel will consist of a member of the HE Team who will act as the Chair and at least one other member drawn from the HE Team. Where the panel decision is unable to reach a consensus the view of a third member will be sought. The third member will be drawn from either the HE Team or their nominee (usually a Course Leader) from a UCS HE programme. The panel may liaise with programme teams regarding appropriate deadlines and appropriate outcomes.

4.4 All claims for consideration of extenuating circumstances should be submitted via the on-line application form which will be provided at induction but can also be requested by emailing the HE Team at he@btc.ac.uk. Applications should be made as soon as the circumstances become apparent and ahead of the assessment deadline or the start of the event assessment. Any required supporting evidence must be supplied at the point of application. Evidence supplied later will only be considered if provided with a valid reason why the evidence could not be supplied at the point of application.

- 4.5 All applications that meet the administrative requirements of the process will be considered in full. The Extenuating Circumstances Panel cannot extend the deadline for a second time for the same assessment. If students are still unable to submit on time, students must apply for an additional Extenuating Circumstance with a valid reason. The Panel will consider this request and if it is considered valid the Award Board will be informed of this. The Award Board will then make a decision about any new deadline that might be offered to the student. This will be communicated to the student following the Award Board.
- 4.6 Students are responsible for submitting accurate information and evidence. Any student suspected of submitting dishonest claims will be referred for action under the **Student Conduct & Disciplinary procedure/policy**. This can be found on the UCS website.
<https://www.somerset.ac.uk/about/policies-regulations/university-centre-somerset/>
- 4.7 Personal information submitted by students as part of a claim will be stored on the student's Individual Learning Plan (ILP) but access will be restricted to staff who need to be aware of any disclosure of circumstances that have been made. Students can see what records are being kept through Pro Portal.

5. TYPE A APPLICATION

- 5.1. Students are responsible for submitting all work for deadline assessments by the specified deadline. However, University Centre Somerset acknowledges that very occasionally things can go wrong at the last moment. Students who are unexpectedly unable to submit/complete an assessment(s) by the deadline are permitted to apply for a Type A 24-hour extension via the online application form. Students who are granted a 24-hour extension will have access to the full range of marks for the assessment.
- 5.2. Students must provide a valid reason as detailed in section 5.4, but they are not required to provide any supporting evidence. A Type A application must be submitted *within* 24 hours of the assessment deadline.
- 5.3. Working to deadlines is a skill that most students need to develop in their studies. Repeated applications for extensions to assessment deadlines may lead to a student requiring a fitness to study meeting as per the UCS HE Admissions Policy.
- 5.4. Examples of circumstances which **would normally be considered valid**:
- Your own health problems
 - Car breaking down/accident
 - For part-time students in full-time employment, exceptional pressure of work or permanent change of employment circumstances
 - Interviews for placements that cannot be changed
 - Computing problems, such as corrupt data or media, poor internet connectivity, or e-submission of an assessment file in an incorrect format, or lack of access to IT facilities.
 - Emergencies affecting yourself, relatives or significant friends
 - Forced house moves
- 5.5. Examples of circumstances which would **not normally be considered valid**:
- You slept in or your alarm clock did not go off.

- Financial problems, including debt sanctions imposed by University Centre Somerset/Bridgwater & Taunton College
- Family celebrations, holidays, planned house moves, or similar events, in which you have input to, or control over, the date or may choose not to participate.
- Appointments of any kind, including legal or medical appointments, which could be rearranged.
- Sporting, recreational or voluntary commitments, unless you are representing University Centre Somerset at national level or your country at international level, or participating in an event that is of benefit to University Centre Somerset national reputation.
- For full-time students, normal pressures of employment, because, by enrolling as a student, you have made a commitment to attend college and make time available for self-study as per your programme requirements.

6. TYPE B APPLICATION

6.1. Students who require a longer extension (up to a maximum of 5 working days) if they are unable to submit/complete an assessment(s) by the deadline can submit an application for a Type B extension via the online application form. Students must provide a valid reason as detailed in section 6.3 however they are not required to provide any supporting evidence. Students who are granted a Type B extension can have their deadlines extended by up to 5 working days and will have access to the full range of marks for the assessment.

6.2. Working to deadlines is a skill expected of degree level students. Repeated applications for extensions to assessment deadlines may lead to a student requiring a fitness to study meeting as per the UCS HE Admissions Policy.

6.3. Examples of circumstances which **would normally be considered valid**:

- Issues relating to COVID-19.
- Your own health problems, including major accident or injury, acute ailments, hospitalisation (including for operations), or those affecting a significant period of study.
- Personal or psychological problems for which you are receiving counselling, or have been referred to a counsellor or similarly qualified practitioner.
- Clinical depression or other significant mental health issue.
- Pregnancy-related conditions and childbirth (including a partner in labour).
- Bereavement causing significant impact.
- Separation or divorce of yourself or your parents.
- Recent burglary, theft or serious car accident.
- Jury service which cannot be deferred.
- Representing University Centre Somerset or one of our partner Universities at national level, or your country at international level, or participation in an event that is of benefit to University Centre Somerset's national or international reputation.
- For part-time students in full-time employment, exceptional pressure of work or permanent change of employment circumstances
- Late diagnosis of, for example, dyslexia, meaning you have not had the appropriate support for assessment
- Issues regarding delays in placements, but only in cases where the delay has arisen due to circumstances beyond a student's control
- For students in BTC/UCS accommodation, poor internet connectivity will be considered an acceptable reason

6.4. Examples of circumstances which would **not normally be considered valid**:

- You slept in or your alarm clock did not go off.
- Accidents or illness affecting relatives or friends, unless serious, or you are a sole carer.
- Financial problems, including debt sanctions imposed by University Centre Somerset/Bridgwater & Taunton College
- Computing problems, such as corrupt data or media, poor internet connectivity, printer failure, or e-submission of an assessment file in an incorrect format, or lack of access to IT facilities. University Centre Somerset students have full access to the computing and internet facilities at the Taunton, Bridgwater and Cannington Campuses.
- Family celebrations, holidays, planned house moves, or similar events, in which you have input to, or control over, the date or may choose not to participate.
- Appointments of any kind, including legal or medical appointments, which could be rearranged.
- Sporting, recreational or voluntary commitments, unless you are representing University Centre Somerset at national level or your country at international level, or participating in an event that is of benefit to University Centre Somerset national reputation.
- For full-time students, normal pressures of employment, because, by enrolling as a student, you have made a commitment to attend college and make time available for self-study as per your programme requirements.

6.5. Students will be notified of the outcome of their application as soon as possible, normally within five working days of submitting a completed application and associated evidence. Students need to be aware that if they are applying for an EC within 5 days of their deadline, they may not receive the decision of the panel either valid or denied, until after the deadline has passed so students are advised to continue working on their assignments. An assignment that is submitted late due to a declined EC application will be considered a late submission and may not be marked. Refer to the Awarding Organisation's Academic Regulations for the course to understand the consequences of late submission as it varies between universities. For example, late submissions from students on an Open University validated programme will incur a deduction of marks, with the following penalties in place: Submission within 6 working days: a 10% reduction for each working day late down to the 40% pass mark and no further. This is not the same on other university-validated courses and can simply result in a mark of zero with the next attempt capped at the Award Board at a maximum of 40%.

7. TYPE C APPLICATION

7.1. Students who require a longer extension of more than 5 working days if they are unable to submit/complete an assessment(s) by the deadline can apply for a Type C extension via the online application form. Students must provide a valid reason as detailed in section 7.5 and they are required to provide supporting evidence. Students who are granted a Type C extension can have their deadlines extended by more than 5 working days and will have access to the full range of marks for the assessment.

7.2. Students will be notified of the outcome of their application as soon as possible, normally within five working days of submitting a completed application and associated evidence. Students need to be aware that if they are applying for an EC within 5 days of their deadline, they may not receive the decision of the panel, either valid or denied, until after the deadline has passed so students are advised to continue working on their assignment(s). An assignment that is

submitted late due to a declined EC application will be considered a late submission and may not be marked. As explained in section 6.5 please refer to the relevant Academic Regulations for the course as different Awarding Organisations have different rules regarding late submissions. For example, late submissions from students on an Open University validated programme will incur a deduction of marks, with the following penalties in place: Submission within 6 working days: a 10% reduction for each working day late down to the 40% pass mark and no further. In some other instances with different universities/Awarding Organisations late submission can result in a mark of zero with the next attempted capped at a maximum of 40% at the Award Board.

7.3. Repeated applications for extensions to assessment deadlines may lead to a student requiring a fitness to study meeting as per the UCS HE Admissions Policy.

7.4. Examples of circumstances which **would normally be considered valid**:

- Issues relating to COVID-19.
- Your own health problems, including major accident or injury, acute ailments, hospitalisation (including for operations), or those affecting a significant period of study.
- Personal or psychological problems for which you are receiving counselling, or have been referred to a counsellor or similarly qualified practitioner.
- Clinical depression or other significant mental health issue.
- Pregnancy-related conditions and childbirth (including a partner in labour).
- Bereavement causing significant impact.
- Separation or divorce of yourself or your parents.
- Recent burglary, theft or serious car accident.
- Jury service which cannot be deferred.
- Representing University Centre Somerset or one of our partner Universities at national level, or your country at international level, or participation in an event that is of benefit to University Centre Somerset's national or international reputation.
- For part-time students in full-time employment, exceptional pressure of work or permanent change of employment circumstances
- Late diagnosis of, for example, dyslexia, meaning you have not had the appropriate support for assessment, including provision in exams.
- A significant change to your financial circumstances after enrolment, such as withdrawal of Student Finance England (SFE) funding or its equivalent mid-year.
- Issues regarding delays in placements, but only in cases where the delay has arisen due to circumstances beyond a student's control

7.5. Examples of circumstances which would **not normally be considered valid**:

- You slept in or your alarm clock did not go off.
- Accidents or illness affecting relatives or friends, unless serious, or you are a sole carer.
- Financial problems, including debt sanctions imposed by University Centre Somerset/Bridgwater & Taunton College
- Computing problems, such as corrupt data or media, poor internet connectivity, printer failure, or e-submission of an assessment file in an incorrect format, or lack of access to IT facilities. University Centre Somerset students have full access to the computing and internet facilities at the Taunton, Bridgwater and Cannington Campuses.

- Family celebrations, holidays, planned house moves, or similar events, in which you have input to, or control over, the date or may choose not to participate.
 - Appointments of any kind, including legal or medical appointments, which could be rearranged.
 - Sporting, recreational or voluntary commitments, unless you are representing University Centre Somerset at national level or your country at international level, or participating in an event that is of benefit to University Centre Somerset national reputation.
 - For full-time students, normal pressures of employment, because, by enrolling as a student, you have made a commitment to attend college and make time available for self-study as per your programme requirements.
- 7.6. Students who wish to temporarily withdraw or defer their studies will be required to apply for a Type C extension explaining their circumstances in full and explicitly state how these circumstances have affected their decision to temporarily withdraw or defer their studies.
- 7.7. Type C Applications should be supported by appropriate evidence. The nature of evidence will vary depending on the circumstances, but it must:
- confirm the existence of the extenuating circumstances and the relevant timeframe;
 - confirm the impact of the extenuating circumstances on the student concerned;
 - Students need to explain why the extenuating circumstances will prevent them from submitting by their original assessment deadline
 - be comprehensible for the panel.
- 7.8. The panel reserves the right to request clarification regarding particular evidence or ask for further evidence. Requests may include, but are not limited to:
- extra supporting documentation;
 - the evidence being sent directly from a third party;
 - the translation of documents into English, as required.

8. TYPE D APPLICATION

- 8.1. Type D applications should be used to request a resit if a student has exceptional circumstances which prevented them from sitting an **examined event assessment**. Students have 24 hours to apply for a Type D extension after the date that their examined event assessment was due to be held. Type D applications are subject to approval.
- 8.2. Examples of circumstances which **would normally be considered valid**:
- Issues relating to COVID-19.
 - Your own health problems, including major accident or injury, acute ailments, hospitalisation (including for operations), or those affecting a significant period of study.
 - Personal or psychological problems for which you are receiving counselling or have been referred to a counsellor or similarly qualified practitioner.
 - Clinical depression or other significant mental health issue.
 - Pregnancy-related conditions and childbirth (including a partner in labour).
 - Bereavement causing significant impact.
 - Separation or divorce of yourself or your parents.

- Recent burglary, theft or serious car accident.
- Jury service which cannot be deferred.
- Representing University Centre Somerset or one of our partner Universities at national level, or your country at international level, or participation in an event that is of benefit to University Centre Somerset's national or international reputation.
- For part-time students in full-time employment, exceptional pressure of work or permanent change of employment circumstances
- Late diagnosis of, for example, dyslexia, meaning you have not had the appropriate support for assessment, including provision in exams.
- Disruption in an exam or assessment, such as a fire alarm going off, or excessive noise from building works.
- Significant life events of close family members, where you can show that no alternative arrangement, such as the date or your attendance, is possible.

8.3. Examples of circumstances which would **not normally be considered valid**:

- You slept in or your alarm clock did not go off.
- Accidents or illness affecting relatives or friends, unless serious, or you are a sole carer.
- Financial problems, including debt sanctions imposed by University Centre Somerset/Bridgwater & Taunton College
- Computing problems, such as corrupt data or media, poor internet connectivity, printer failure, or e-submission of an assessment file in an incorrect format, or lack of access to IT facilities. University Centre Somerset students have full access to the computing and internet facilities at the Taunton, Bridgwater and Cannington Campuses.
- Family celebrations, holidays, planned house moves, or similar events, in which you have input to, or control over, the date or may choose not to participate.
- Appointments of any kind, including legal or medical appointments, which could be rearranged.
- Sporting, recreational or voluntary commitments, unless you are representing University Centre Somerset at national level or your country at international level, or participating in an event that is of benefit to University Centre Somerset national reputation.
- For full-time students, normal pressures of employment, because, by enrolling as a student, you have made a commitment to attend college and make time available for self-study as per your programme requirements.

9. POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

- 9.1. Students will be provided with email confirmation from the HE Team on whether their application was considered valid or not. All applications that are denied will require the student to submit their assignment(s) on the original deadline set for them.
- 9.2. Students who have a valid Type A application will receive a confirmation email confirming their new deadline time and date, 24 hours after the original deadline.
- 9.3. For valid Type B applications, a student will normally be able to submit/complete their assessment at a later date, up to 5 working days. The date and time will be confirmed to the student in a confirmation letter sent via the student's college email address.
- 9.4. For valid Type C applications, the student will be able to submit/complete the assessment at a later date, which can be more than 5 working days. The date

and time will be confirmed to the student in a confirmation letter sent via the student's college email address. Furthermore, students that have applied for a Type C extension in order to notify University Centre Somerset that they wish to temporarily withdraw or defer their studies will receive a confirmation email.

- 9.5. For valid Type D applications, students will be able to resit the exam at the next resit opportunity, the date will be confirmed to the student by the Course Leader or the Award Board.

10. LATE APPLICATIONS

- 10.1. Applications made after the deadline date will be considered a late application. However, students applying for a Type A or Type D extension have 24 hours after the submission/exam date to apply.
- 10.2. Any late application must contain a valid reason why it could not be submitted within the deadline.
- 10.3. University Centre Somerset will consider these on a case-by-case basis via the Extenuating Circumstances Panel.

11. ACADEMIC APPEAL

- 11.1. Students may formally appeal the decision of an Extenuating Circumstances Panel following the outcome being emailed to them. This will follow the process and time constraints set out in the UCS HE Academic Appeals Policy (available on the University Centre Somerset website: [UCS \(somerset.ac.uk\)](http://UCS(somerset.ac.uk)) in the UCS policies section.
- 11.2. Academic appeals which question academic judgement, without sufficient grounds or valid supporting evidence, shall not be considered.
- 11.3. An academic appeal against an EC decision can only be submitted on the following grounds (via email to HE@btc.ac.uk):
- There is evidence to suggest that the Extenuating Circumstances Policy was not followed, in a manner that could have resulted in a different decision if it had been properly followed
 - There is evidence to suggest that there was an administrative error or some other irregularity in the consideration of the request.
 - The decision of the Extenuating Circumstances Panel failed to take into account the evidence of Extenuating Circumstances provided
 - New material evidence is available which the student was unable, for good reason, to provide earlier in the process
- 11.4. Academic Appeals should normally be made within ten working days of the date of the email communicating the extenuating circumstances decision.
- 11.5. However, if a student wishes to claim for extenuating circumstances for a taught module after the formal publication of results at the end of the year, this will be dealt with as an appeal against the decision of an Award Board. In this case, students must submit their appeal by the deadline specified when the results are published. To submit an appeal, students must complete the appeal form and submit it, with any supporting evidence, to HE@btc.ac.uk. Any academic appeal against the decision of an Award Board which is raised based on extenuating circumstances, must contain a

valid reason to explain why information could not have been submitted at the time. Reference should be made to the **UCS HE Academic Appeals Policy**.

12. OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATOR FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (OIAHE)

- 12.1. If the student has completed University Centre Somerset's internal appeals procedure and they are still dissatisfied with the outcome, they may refer their case to the relevant University partner or Pearson.
- 12.2. If following the end of this process, the student is still dissatisfied, they will be issued with a Completion of Procedures Letter by the institution that completes the final review. This would normally be the relevant university. A student may then be eligible to raise the matter with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education [Students - OIAHE](#). Details can be found in the Academic Appeals Policy.

13. REPEATED USE OF THE EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES PROCESS

- 13.1. University Centre Somerset has a responsibility to monitor the progress of students throughout their studies and intervene where progress is not being made at the expected rate. Where a student is not moving through the levels of their studies as expected, because they need to make multiple applications for exceptional circumstances, University Centre Somerset is likely to refer students to support areas for additional support needs. It may also be appropriate to recommend the student undertakes a fitness to study discussion with their Course Leader. (Refer to the **UCS HE Fitness to Study section within the UCS HE Admissions Policy and UCS HE Extenuating Circumstances policy**).

14. REVIEW OF POLICY

- 14.1. The policy will be reviewed by the date stated on the front cover with any amendments being submitted for approval to the SMT Policy Review Group. Approved policies will also be provided to the Senate who oversee HE at University Centre Somerset.