

Extenuating Circumstances - Guidelines to Students (Method B)

This is one of the three methods for part time, distance learning and/or postgraduate students. You will be informed at the start of the academic year which particular method applied to you.

Method B is for students who will be given a twenty working day extension to their coursework type assessments.

The University of Portsmouth wants all students to undertake and pass all their assessments at the first attempt and make normal progression through their course. We are aware that failure to progress normally can lead to financial difficulties for both the student and the University. However, there may be occasions during the year where students are affected by extenuating circumstances and are unable to complete their assessments.

The University of Portsmouth operates a “fit to sit” extenuating circumstances policy. This means that if you sit an examination or submit an assignment on time, you are declaring yourself fit to sit the assessment and no extenuating circumstances will be accepted. You can only submit extenuating circumstances if you have failed to submit coursework on time, missed an examination or were taken ill during an examination.

Extenuating circumstances cannot be submitted for either Second Attempt Assessments or Deferred First Attempt Assessments and any that are submitted will be rejected.

Extenuating Circumstances are circumstances relating to your health and /or personal life which are of a sufficiently serious nature to result in your being unable to attend, complete, or submit an assessment on time.

Problems with course management that have affected your performance, either individually or as part of a group should be remedied by following the student complaints procedure.

The key words are serious and significant. Life, unfortunately, is full of difficulties, irritations, and worries that would not be expected to have a significant effect on your performance or to prevent you from attending, completing, or submitting on time an assessment. We all face difficulties and problems that we normally are expected to overcome. Only serious problems that can reasonably be expected to have had a significant effect will be considered valid. So circumstances such as a cold, feeling under the weather, a few sleepless nights, the illness of a relative, financial worries, difficulties with a computer, the pressures of sitting exams or meeting deadlines, will not be considered to be valid reasons for failing to attend, complete on time, or submit assessments.

Generally speaking, serious long-term circumstances that have a significant effect on your ability to study will be expected to result in you requesting a suspension of your studies or withdrawing from your course rather than claiming extenuating circumstances.

In line with University policy, students with a disability or learning difficulty should have declared these and secured an agreement as to what additional help the University can reasonably provide as part of the admissions process. The disability or learning difficulty cannot be regarded as an extenuating circumstance.

If you have been affected by an extenuating circumstance, you should complete an Extenuating Circumstance Form. The Form will be available from your Department Office. You should complete a separate form for each circumstance. You must complete and submit the form within 20 working days of the affected assessment date if it is a coursework type assessment or by the end of the Consolidation and Assessment Period if it is an examination type assessment.

The Students Union academic caseworkers will be able to advise you on completing the form, as will named members of your own department. When you complete the form you should take care to record exactly which assessment artefacts have been affected (by assessment artefact we mean the particular examination, course work, essay, laboratory report, presentation etc). You must link these assessment artefacts to the particular unit(s) they have been set for. Most importantly, you must clearly state a case that explains why the circumstances were serious and how they affected your ability to attend or submit the assessment artefact. You will need to relate the dates of the circumstance(s) and the assessment(s) carefully to the reasons you give. The end product needs to be convincing. Finally, you need to be able to provide some evidence to back up your case. Documentary evidence must either be in English, or accompanied by an official translation in English.

The criteria explain what types of evidence are acceptable. In cases of illness, you should obtain a medical certificate if your illness prevents you from attending the University for more than five working days or if you have a severe medical condition that means you have been unable to complete a coursework assignment or attend an examination - if your illness or condition did not last that long or the medical condition was not severe, you will need to submit a note of self-certification. Please note that medical certificates should be signed whilst the symptoms of your illness or condition were still evident to the Doctor. Repeated cases of self-certification will mean that the University will ask you for a signed release so that your doctor can provide information about your state of health. Repeated cases of self-certification where there is no such supporting evidence may be judged to be invalid.

Reference to a professional relationship in the criteria may be to a doctor, a counsellor or other appropriate member of student support services, or some other professional person who, through the nature of their professional relationship with you, knows about your difficulties and can confirm what you are claiming.

Your submitted form will be judged by an Extenuating Circumstances Officer appointed to consider all submitted cases in your Department, judging them against the criteria published annually by the University. You will be notified of the names of the Extenuating Circumstances Officers by your Department at the start of the Academic Year. The Extenuating Circumstances Officer will decide whether they consider your case to be valid and, if so, which assessment artefacts in which units have been affected. The decision will be checked by another Extenuating Circumstances Officer to confirm that it is reasonable and you will be informed of the outcome within ten working days of submitting the form.

If you have particularly distressing extenuating circumstances which you wish to be dealt with as confidentially as possible, you should contact your Head of Department directly, who will follow a special procedure for Serious and Confidential Circumstances. If you do not wish to contact the Head of Department, you may contact any member of University staff. That person, however, will have to then follow the appropriate procedure in intervening on your behalf, i.e. they must contact the Head of Department.

Should the Extenuating Circumstances Officer consider your circumstances to be valid, the Unit Assessment Board and Board of Examiners will be advised that, in particular named assessment artefacts, your attendance or submission was prevented by valid extenuating circumstances.

Unit Assessment Boards may choose one of the following outcomes for students with valid extenuating circumstances:

- At the first attempt, if you have failed to attend an examination type assessment (which is any assessment undertaken within a constrained period of time at a set location such as examinations, in class tests, presentations and oral examinations) the Unit Assessment Board may allow you to have a Deferred First Attempt Assessment.
- If you have successfully completed at least two other assessments in the affected unit, the Unit Assessment Board may extrapolate an overall mark from these, if it is satisfied there is sufficient evidence you have met the learning outcomes of the unit.

- Should you fail to submit a coursework assessment on time and an assessment penalty has been applied, that penalty will be lifted as long as you have submitted within twenty working days of the original date of submission. You can not submit a further extenuating circumstances claim within this period to extend the time further.

Should you be unsure whether your assessment artefact is considered coursework or an examination, please contact the Unit Co-ordinator.

Should you fail your Deferred First Attempt Assessment, you will be deemed to have failed the unit and will not be eligible to progress into the next academic year. You can not submit additional extenuating circumstances for deferral work.

No student will be allowed to trail units or carry deferrals into the next academic year.

Please also note that a penalty imposed because of an assessment offence, other than late submission, or because of disciplinary action taken by the University against you, will over-ride a valid extenuating circumstance and will invalidate the remedies explained above.

Useful Links

[Extenuating Circumstances – Guidance for Unit Assessment Boards](#)

[Extenuating Circumstances – Criteria](#)

[Extenuating Circumstances – Guidance for Boards of Examiners](#)

[Extenuating Circumstances – Guidance for Extenuating Circumstances Officers](#)

[Extenuating Circumstances – Procedures](#)

[Withdrawal and Suspension of Studies](#)

[Extenuating circumstances](#)

[Coursework](#)

[Examinations](#)

[Unit Assessment Boards](#)