

APIIT/APU Extenuating Circumstances Policy

Purpose

To provide a systematic approach to reviewing the impact of unforeseen or unavoidable circumstances which may affect the acquisition or demonstration of knowledge by a student in order to ensure a fair means to demonstrate their capabilities during assessments.

Policy for Reviewing Claims for Extenuating Circumstances

Students who believe that their performance in any element of assessment or their participation in the learning process has been adversely affected by circumstances outside their control may be eligible to submit a claim for extenuating circumstances. The claim will be considered by the Extenuating Circumstances Committee, which will decide whether or not to uphold the claim. The date of the Extenuating Circumstances Committee meetings will be published. The Committee will meet prior to the Examination Boards.

Making a Claim for Extenuating Circumstances

A student will be asked to indicate the nature of the circumstance for which the claim is being made (i.e. late or non-submission of coursework/project, non-attendance at an examination/class test, performance affected by mitigating circumstances or for non-attendance at a face-to-face learning activity). In addition the student must specify the modules and assessments for which the claim applies, the dates for which the circumstances apply and a brief description of the circumstances. Only one form needs to be completed for all assessments for which a claim is being made. The student is responsible for ensuring that all assessment details are listed on the form.

Supporting Evidence for the Claim

All claims for extenuating circumstances must normally be supported by relevant and independent documentary evidence, such as

Unforeseen Circumstance	Evidence
Illness	Letter from a Specialist Medical Centre or Government Hospital NOTE: An MC from a private clinic or general practice doctor will not be accepted
Death in the family	Death Certificate
Accident/Robbery	Police Report

Applications for extenuating circumstances are strengthened when supported by University staff such as Academic Mentors, Programme Leaders or Lecturing Staff. The University will not accept self-certification of your own circumstances or other evidence which is not supplied by an independent authority.

Extenuating Circumstances Committee Meetings

The Extenuating Circumstances Committee normally meets twice per month.

The Committee will look at each case individually and anonymously. The committee comprises Senior APIIT/APU staff and lecturers, its meetings and composition are confidential.

The Committee will consider each claim. The Chair will present each case to the Extenuating Circumstances Committee.

The procedures are designed to safeguard the confidentiality of the student's claim. The papers relating to each case will not be copied. Each case will be treated anonymously. The student's name will not be used during the meetings of the Extenuating Circumstances Committee. Only the Administrator will have access to the name for the purpose of follow-up action.

As some extenuating circumstances are of a highly sensitive nature the student may feel reluctant to put details on the Extenuating Circumstances Form. In such cases the student should enter 'Confidential' on the form and attach written evidence in a sealed envelope. Access to the information will be restricted to the Administrator and the Chair of the Extenuating Circumstances Committee. In exceptional circumstances the Chair of the Examination Board and the External Examiner(s) may also be given access to this information. Future access to these records will continue to be restricted. It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure that confidentiality is maintained.

NOTES:

- The onus is on the students to supply sufficient documentary information to support their claim. If the Extenuating Circumstances Committee believes it has insufficient evidence it has the right to turn down the claim on that basis.
- The student must bear any costs incurred in obtaining appropriate documentation.
- The student should submit a claim for extenuating circumstances with supporting evidence no more than 3 working days after the extenuating circumstance occurred.
- If the student is unable to submit the EC personally, the student must assign a representative to submit the EC on his/her behalf. If further information is required by APIIT/APU, the student must provide it within 5 working days.
- The Extenuating Circumstances Committee reserves the right to contact any individual person/persons named on the Extenuating Circumstances Form.

Outcomes of the Extenuating Circumstances Committee Meetings

The Extenuating Circumstances Committee will review each claim submitted independently and anonymously and will determine whether the claim is:

- Approved
- Rejected
- Deferred – requiring further information/evidence from the student

The Extenuating Circumstances Committee will inform the appropriate Examination Board of its decision.

The Administrator will inform the student of the decision of the Extenuating Circumstances Committee in writing within 5 working days of the meeting at which the claim was reviewed.

Should the student wish to appeal against a decision reached by the Extenuating Circumstances Committee they must do so in writing within 7 working days of receipt of the decision.

NOTES:

Grounds for Claiming Extenuating Circumstances

The University has put in place arrangements to make reasonable adjustments for students with a disability. As a result, if you have a disability, you should only normally claim for extenuating circumstances when new and unforeseen circumstances occur which affect your work and are not addressed by the reasonable adjustment arrangements.

In considering claims of extenuating circumstances, the key considerations for the University will always be whether the circumstances were beyond your control and could not have been foreseen or prevented, together with the impact these circumstances would have had on your academic performance.

Taking into account the criteria above, the grounds on which extenuating circumstances can be claimed are normally limited to:

- a serious illness, which would have detrimentally affected your performance;
- the death of a close family member or personal friend, normally in the period leading up to the date of the assessment, which would have detrimentally affected your performance;
- other serious circumstances beyond your control, which could not have been foreseen or prevented and which would have detrimentally affected your performance.

If you are studying on a part time or distance learning programme, the University expects you to plan your work in order that you allow sufficient time to cope with both the demands of employment and study workloads. Nevertheless, it is recognised that you may, for example, have unplanned work patterns and/or unforeseen and exceptionally high workloads, and in those cases where acceptable evidence is provided, claims for extenuating circumstances could be considered.

Grounds Not Normally Considered for Claiming Extenuating Circumstances

You may not normally claim extenuating circumstances on the basis that your academic performance has been affected by family, financial or other lifestyle problems. In particular, extenuating circumstances cannot normally be claimed on any of the following grounds (this list is not exhaustive):

- Second or subsequent attempt of an element of assessment (exam or coursework) where an EC has been upheld for a previous attempt
- Inadequate planning, organisation or management on your part, this may include:
 - Development of a solution taking longer than anticipated
 - Learning a programming language taking longer than anticipated
 - Technical difficulties in integrating elements of a solution
 - etc
- Timetabling of coursework or examinations
- Misreading of assessment dates and times
- Personal computer or printer problems
- Minor illnesses, such as a cold
- Holidays or social occasions
- Transport problems
- Moving house
- Normal work patterns & pressures of employment
- Pregnancy (unless unexpected complications occur)

If you are uncertain whether your claim might be legitimate, please discuss this with your Academic Mentor or your Programme Leader.

Any student who is alleged to have submitted falsified evidence in support of a claim of extenuating circumstances will be referred for consideration under the terms of the APIIT/APU Academic Dishonesty Regulations.

STUDENT HANDBOOK APPENDIX:

Guidance on How To Submit A Claim for Extenuating Circumstances

Q1 What do we mean by Extenuating Circumstances (EC)?

These are normally circumstances that have prevented you either from demonstrating, or acquiring, the skills, knowledge or competencies associated with a particular module(s). These could be defined as either:

- Unforeseeable
e.g. you suffered a broken arm just prior to an examination and couldn't write

or

- Unpreventable
e.g. you did everything in your power to ensure the safety of your work, by keeping back up discs, but a house fire destroyed everything

or

you are required to leave the local area for medical treatment which cannot be postponed or need to return to your local area for visa requirements.

A claim form should be completed by any student affected by extenuating circumstances

Q2 What happens when IT equipment fails?

The following examples typically represent some of the most frequently encountered situations with appropriate guidance given.

N.B. In cases where IT equipment is cited as the basis for a claim you will **ALWAYS** be expected to submit the latest draft of your work. **If you do not do so, you will receive a zero grade for that piece of work.**

Circumstances and guidelines involving IT equipment failure which prevented you from **acquiring** skills/knowledge/competencies:

- Failure affecting the majority of equipment in a computer lab

Given that IT equipment can fail, if this occurs on one or two occasions within a semester then it would be expected that your lecturer would make alternative arrangements to cover the work. However, if this situation were to occur for several booked sessions, then the lecturer concerned would be expected to countersign your claim for extenuating circumstances. It would also be expected that this situation would be taken into account when assessing the module.

- Failure affecting a single workstation in a lab

This would not be considered to be an appropriate basis upon which to submit a claim for extenuating circumstances.

- Failure of your personal computer, laptop or network connection

If you have chosen to use your own computer/laptop on University premises or connect via an external network connection and are then unable to carry out the work as a result of this action, this would not form the basis of a valid claim.

- Failure to provide appropriate software

If you choose to do an individual project based on a particular version/type of software, then the onus is upon you to ensure that this software is available prior to starting the project. This action should form part of your project plan, and any problems arising from compatibility or availability of appropriate software would not be accepted as valid extenuating circumstances on the basis that it would show an inappropriate lack of planning.

- Insufficient computers in the lab for the class size

It would be expected that the lecturer concerned would take appropriate action in such an eventuality and if necessary take this issue into account as part of the assessment of the module.

- Circumstances and guidelines involving IT equipment failure which will prevent you from **demonstrating** skills/knowledge/competencies

- **Failure affecting a large number of systems at assignment deadline time**

If a significant number of computers were out of action for several hours then this might form the basis for granting a short extension to the assignment deadline. It would be reasonable to expect you to submit the latest draft of your work from a few days prior to the deadline to support your request.

You should request the Technical Assistant to countersign your claim for extenuating circumstances.

- Theft of home computer or laptop

Students are expected to make a back up copy of all their work on an appropriate backup device. This should be stored separately from the computer/laptop. A claim submitted on this basis would not be upheld.

- Insufficient computers/printers to do the work

A claim submitted upon this basis would not be supported on the grounds that it would indicate lack of advanced planning by you.

- APIIT/APU's systems incompatible with home computer/laptop

It would be expected that you should check that work brought in from home could be presented or printed at APIIT/APU well before an assessment deadline. A claim submitted on this basis would not be upheld.

- Failure of the computer resulting in an inability to save work

A claim submitted on this basis should always be accompanied by the submission of the latest draft of your work.

- The computer labs closed earlier than expected

A claim submitted upon this basis would not be supported on the grounds that it would indicate a lack of advanced planning by you.

- Failure of a Backup Device

This is one of the most common claims for extenuating circumstances and is rarely upheld. If you are expected to be computer literate you should have a secure back up copy of your work and therefore should not be affected seriously by the loss of work from your backup device.

If your backup device does fail, you must submit the latest draft of your work by the normal hand-in date for that piece of work. It would certainly not be acceptable for a final year student to submit a claim on this basis.

- Failure of both main disk and back up device

There may be occasions when a faulty system may have caused the corruption of all of your storage device. It may be possible for APIIT/APU Technical Services staff to confirm that this had occurred and it is expected that you would be able to submit the latest draft of your work.

- Failure of Printing Facilities

It is a very common problem for students to wait until the last moment to print out work and then find that printing facilities fail. A claim submitted on this basis would not be supported on the grounds that this indicates poor planning on your part.

Q3 What grounds will not normally be considered as extenuating circumstances?

You may not normally claim extenuating circumstances on the basis that your academic performance has been affected by family, financial or other lifestyle problems. In particular, extenuating circumstances cannot normally be claimed on any of the following grounds (this list is not exhaustive):

- Second or subsequent attempt of an element of assessment (exam or coursework) where an EC has been upheld for a previous attempt
- Inadequate planning, organisation or management on your part, this may include:
 - Development of a solution taking longer than anticipated
 - Learning a programming language taking longer than anticipated
 - Technical difficulties in integrating elements of a solution, etc
- Timetabling of coursework or examinations
- Misreading of assessment dates and times
- Personal computer or printer problems
- Minor illnesses, such as a cold
- Holidays or social occasions
- Transport problems
- Moving house
- Normal work patterns & pressures of employment
- Pregnancy (unless unexpected complications occur)

If you are uncertain whether your claim might be legitimate, please discuss this with your Academic Mentor or your Programme Leader.

Any student who is alleged to have submitted falsified evidence in support of a claim of extenuating circumstances will be referred for consideration under the terms of the APIIT/APU Academic Dishonesty Regulations.

Q4 How do I make a claim?

You need to complete the Extenuating Circumstances Form, which you can obtain from APIIT/APU Webpace.

Q5 What else do I need to do?

- It is your responsibility to supply the appropriate evidence to support your claim.
- Where you EC concerns sickness a full medical report from a Specialist Medical Centre or Government Hospital will be needed.
- You should not submit a claim where a single seminar, lecture or lab work has been missed due to illness.
- If you join an award part-way through the semester, late entry will not be viewed as an extenuating circumstance. This would not be considered to be an appropriate basis upon which to submit a claim for extenuating circumstances.

Q6 If I submit a claim for extenuating circumstances when do I have to hand in my work?

Where a claim for extenuating circumstances has been submitted, you must submit your coursework either by the original deadline date for submission of that piece of work or, within a maximum of 10 working days of the original deadline date.

The Extenuating Circumstances Panel will take account of the timing of your extenuating circumstances and the date you submitted your work. **The final decision will be made by the committee.**

Q7 Who will consider my claim?

The Extenuating Circumstances Committee comprises Senior APIIT/APU academic staff. Its meetings and composition are confidential. Each claim submitted is reviewed individually and anonymously.

The Panel decides whether to uphold your claim or not and will inform you, in writing, of its decision. Sometimes it may have to defer its decision until you can supply further information.

Q8 How often does the Committee meet?

The Committee normally meet twice per month. You can find out when the next meeting will take place from Webpace or from the Administration Counter.

Q9 Who will know about my circumstances?

It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure confidentiality is maintained.

Only the Chair of the Committee and the administrator will have access to your name and details of your circumstances. The rest of the committee members will be unaware of who has submitted the form. We acknowledge that some circumstances are of a highly sensitive nature and that you may feel reluctant to detail the circumstances on the form. In such cases 'Confidential' should be written on the form and supporting evidence attached in a sealed envelope where appropriate.

N.B. You are strongly advised to talk to an appropriate member of staff about your extenuating circumstances **in addition to** submitting your claim form. Although the staff member will not be able to influence the decision of the Committee, they may be able to direct you to further support and guidance as appropriate.

Q10 The Extenuating Circumstances Form

Don't panic! **If you need guidance in completing the form you can contact your Academic Mentor or Programme Leader**

The claim form is easy to complete and consists of 4 sections:

Sections A, B, C & D must be completed before you submit the form.

Section A of the form contains details about you and your programme of study as well as contact details in order for the decision of the committee meeting to be sent to you.

Only one form needs to be completed when claiming for extenuating circumstances. The type of assessment or face-to-face learning activity affected, the type of claim being submitted, and the modules affected should be listed in **Section B**.

Section C asks for details of the circumstances and details of the supporting documentation provided by you to support your claim.

Section D should only be completed if you are unable to provide supporting documentation and require a supporting statement to be provided by a Medical Doctor, your Programme Leader, Academic Mentor, Module Lecturer/Tutor, Welfare Counsellor or other independent suitably qualified person.

Q11 What should I include when I explain my circumstances?

The circumstances must have been at the same time as the acquisition of the skill/knowledge/competency or the assessment of the module. If you have missed an assignment through ill health, then the illness must coincide with the preparation, writing or deadline of that assessment.

If you are a part-time student and have been unable to submit your work by the original deadline date because, for instance, you were required by your employer to work away from home for several weeks at the time you should have submitted your work, you must provide a letter from your employer confirming this. The circumstances should be detailed concisely. The Panel should be provided with the essential information to enable it to make an informed decision regarding the circumstances.

Q12 Supporting Evidence

Please note that minor illnesses or ailments such as a cold will **not** be accepted as valid reasons for extenuating circumstances. Unless you have seen a Doctor or Counsellor **at the time** of your illness or problem, it is unlikely that your claim will be accepted. For instance, a letter from a Specialist Medical Centre or Government Hospital stating that you were seen on a particular date and told him/her that you **HAD BEEN** ill will not normally be accepted by the Committee.

Dates of evidence must correspond with the extenuating circumstances detailed.

Where documentary evidence is not available then a supporting statement is required in support of your claim. This should be obtained from a Medical Doctor at a public hospital or specialist clinic, Programme Leader, Academic Mentor, Module Lecturer/Tutor, Welfare Counsellor or other independent suitably qualified person.

A medical report must be on headed paper and/or stamped by the clinic/hospital.

Your circumstances will dictate the nature of the evidence that is required to be submitted. For example, an illness would require evidence from a Specialist Medical Centre or Government Hospital, or Welfare Counsellor. Academic Mentor or Programme Leader will be able to offer advice to you on the appropriate form of evidence which will be required for other kinds of circumstance, particularly if it is not practically possible to produce evidence at the time (e.g. close family bereavement, assault etc). In the case of a close family bereavement, a death certificate or a letter from an appropriate relative or Medical Doctor or other corroborating evidence will be accepted.

Q13 What if I have no evidence?

A claim is unlikely to be upheld without appropriate supporting evidence. You should review the circumstances and try to find an independent person, organization or support service that can provide verification. A member of staff may be able to provide a supporting statement.

Q14 What happens next if my claim is upheld?

If your claim is upheld for extenuating circumstances then your work will be marked and a grade confirmed by the appropriate Board in due course. Unless your claim is for late submission you will be given the opportunity to either accept the grade achieved or submit for further assessment in that module (or component of module) against which you have claimed extenuating circumstances so that you can prove your level of ability in that assessment.

Please note that you will not simply be given a higher grade because of your extenuating circumstances.

Q15 What happens if my claim is not upheld?

Should you wish to appeal against a decision reached by the Extenuating Circumstances Committee then you must do so in writing within 7 working days of receipt of the decision using the normal appeals procedure.

It should be noted that the only grounds for an appeal against the decision of an Extenuating Circumstances Committee are that

- The Panel did not take full and proper account of your extenuating circumstances claim; **OR**
- New, relevant and independent evidence, which for good reason you had been unable to make available to the Extenuating Circumstances Committee, had become available.