

Fit to Sit and Extenuating Circumstances **Policy and Procedure**

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The University wants all students to achieve their potential. Students are expected to take responsibility for their own learning and the University recognises that students perform to the best of their capabilities if they regularly attend classes and participate in all activities associated with their modules.
- 1.2 The University also recognises that during their study students may experience significant personal difficulties that are outside their control and which impact on their ability to study and/or complete assessments.
- 1.3 In addition, the University recognises that students who participate in external activities at a national or international level may also find their studies disrupted as a consequence.
- 1.4 The aim of the University's Fit to Sit and Extenuating Circumstances Policy is to ensure that students submit assessments when they are fit to do so and that no student is disadvantaged by circumstances beyond their control, whilst maintaining academic standards.
- 1.5 The policy enables students to provide to the University evidence of circumstances which are having a negative impact on their study.
- 1.6 Where extenuating circumstances are approved students will be permitted to defer submission of an assessment to the next opportunity (which may be in the following academic year). In such cases the work will be graded as if it were a first attempt. For resit or retake assessments the grade will be capped in line with the Academic Regulations¹.
- 1.7 Students wishing to apply for extenuating circumstances should also read the Guidance for Students on Extenuating Circumstances, Fit to Sit, Extensions and Late Submission².
- 1.8 Students who are able to submit an assessment but require a short extension to their deadline should refer to the Late Submission and Extension Policy and Procedure³.

¹ University of Wolverhampton Academic Regulations, available at <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/about-us/governance/legal-information/policies-and-regulations/academic-regulations/>

² University of Wolverhampton Guidance for Students on Extenuating Circumstances, Fit to Sit, Extensions and Late submission, available at <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/about-us/governance/legal-information/policies-and-regulations/>

³ University of Wolverhampton Late Submission and Extension Policy and Procedure – available at <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/about-us/governance/legal-information/policies-and-regulations/>

2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy is applicable to all students registered on a University of Wolverhampton award at undergraduate, postgraduate and postgraduate research levels. This includes students in UK and international partnerships and distance learners.
- 2.2 Where this policy is incompatible with courses which adhere to professional body regulations the professional body regulations and procedures will take precedence. Where this applies further information will be published in the Course Guide.

3 Fit to Sit Policy

- 3.1 The University operates a ‘fit-to-sit’ policy.
- 3.2 This means that if a student sits/submits an assessment they are declaring, through the submission process, that they are fit to do so.
- 3.3 If a student considers that their personal circumstances are seriously affecting their ability to prepare for or sit an assessment they should **not** take the assessment and should submit an extenuating circumstances claim.
- 3.4 Students who submit assessments or sit an examination/test cannot later claim that their performance was affected by extenuating circumstances unless there is strong, independent medical evidence that establishes that the student was incapable of determining whether or not they were fit to undertake the assessment.
- 3.5 If a student has been granted extenuating circumstances for an assessment they should not submit/sit that assessment. If the student chooses to submit/sit the assessment this will normally be taken as a declaration that they consider themselves fit to do so. In these circumstances any extenuating circumstances claim will be made void, and no additional attempt at the assessment will be provided, outside of the normal resit and retake provision.
- 3.6 The policy does not apply where a student sits an examination/test/practical but becomes ill during the course of that examination/test/practical. Where this occurs the student should inform the invigilator during the exam/test/practical, leave the exam room and submit an extenuating circumstances claim. The exam will not be marked or feedback given.

4 Extenuating Circumstances Policy

- 4.1 Extenuating circumstances are serious and exceptional factors outside a student’s control which have a negative impact upon their ability to prepare for or submit/sit an assessment
- 4.2 It is to be expected that students will on occasion experience minor illness or unexpected/adverse events which coincide with the preparation of/for assessments or examinations/tests. These are part of normal life experience and students should expect that they may have to manage some difficult circumstances in addition to their studies.
- 4.3 Students are expected to manage their learning, assessments and revision in a way which anticipates that events will not always run smoothly.

- 4.4 Students are expected to keep their personal tutor, student advisor or other members of faculty staff informed of any difficulties they are experiencing at the time at which they occur. Good communication with the University can facilitate early interventions which may make an extenuating circumstances claim unnecessary.
- 4.5 Students are expected to familiarise themselves with and access the support services provided by the University. Details of the support services available to students are published on the University website⁴.
- 4.6 In order to be considered for extenuating circumstances, the difficulties experienced by a student must meet all of the following criteria:
- i) They must be outside of the student's control, i.e. the student could not have prevented them.
 - ii) There must be independent evidence that the circumstances had a significant impact on the student's ability to complete the assessment(s) for which they are claiming.
 - iii) The timing of the circumstances must be directly relevant to the timing of the assessment for which they are claiming.
- 4.7 Extenuating circumstances can be difficult to define as individuals can react differently to the circumstances that affect them.
- 4.8 The following is an "indicative" list of extenuating circumstances that **are likely** be accepted as valid extenuating circumstances. In all cases independent supporting evidence must be provided.
- i) The death of a close relative, friend or significant other.
 - ii) Serious physical and/or mental ill health
 - iii) Serious personal accident or injury.
 - iv) Illness or ailment affecting the student on the day of, or immediately prior to an exam/test/practical.
 - v) Major and unplanned changes to employment where a student's course or mode of study permits, or is integrated with employment (e.g. part time study/apprenticeships).
 - vi) Jury service (if attendance is compulsory and cannot be deferred).
 - vii) Significant disruption to travel arrangements affecting an exam/test/practical.
 - viii) Significant and unanticipated changes to caring responsibilities.
 - ix) Unexpected difficulties experienced during pregnancy.
 - x) Childbirth.
 - xi) Domestic or personal disruptions (e.g. job change, house move) where there is evidence that these have resulted in, or caused a deterioration of, a mental health condition.
 - xii) Participation in an approved external activity at a national or international level (e.g. elite level sport). Approval must be sought from the Faculty in advance.

This is not an exhaustive list. In general, claims which meet the criteria detailed in 4.6 (above) are likely to be accepted.

⁴ University Website: Current Students - <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/current-students/student-support/>

4.9 The following is an “indicative” list of circumstances which are **unlikely** to be accepted by the University as valid extenuating circumstances:

- i) Minor, short term illnesses affecting the student’s preparation for an assessment. Examples include colds, headaches, minor accidents or injuries.
- ii) General examination related stress or anxiety during revision and assessment periods.
- iii) Day to day domestic or personal disruptions.
- iv) Financial difficulties including loss of access to University facilities as a consequence of tuition fee debt for which the student is personally liable.
- v) Social obligations and similar avoidable commitments such as holidays, weddings, parties and routine medical appointments.
- vi) Study related problems, such as poor time management, equipment failure, and failure to back up copies of lost, corrupted or stolen work.
- vii) Disabilities and medical conditions for which special arrangements or adaptations have already been made. The University may consider a sudden and unexpected worsening of a pre-existing condition.
- viii) The absence of a team member for group work, subject to the nature of the assignment.
- ix) Employment-related issues (**except** for students in full time employment studying on a part-time course/apprenticeship).

4.10 Repeat claims in consecutive semesters for the same reason, may be subject to additional scrutiny and review by Senior Tutors.

4.11 In accordance with the University of Wolverhampton Academic Regulations⁵, the granting of extenuating circumstances does not extend the maximum period of time available for a student to complete their award. Repeat extenuating circumstances claims over a period of time may result in the student being unable to complete the award within the permitted time period.

4.12 Students with ongoing difficulties are expected to seek appropriate advice and support or to take a Leave of Absence⁶ until they are fit to continue with their studies.

5 Evidence Requirements

5.1 Extenuating circumstances will only be granted where there is independent supporting evidence which demonstrates that the circumstances significantly affected the student’s ability to complete the assessment for which they are claiming.

5.2 Students must provide documentary evidence that substantiates their extenuating circumstances claim. The evidence should:

- i) be dated,
- ii) be relevant to the dates of the assessment for which the claim is being made,
- iii) indicate how the student’s performance was affected and/or how it affected their ability to attend, complete or submit an assessment.

⁵ University of Wolverhampton Academic Regulations, available at <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/about-us/governance/legal-information/policies-and-regulations/academic-regulations/>

⁶ University of Wolverhampton Leave of Absence Guidelines: available at <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/about-us/governance/legal-information/policies-and-regulations/>

5.3 Examples of valid independent evidence:

- i) A verified copy of a death certificate to cover bereavement claims relating to a close relative. Where a death certificate is not available or where the claim relates to someone who is not a close relative a medical note recording the impact of bereavement on the student's health will be accepted.
- ii) Medical notes – these must be on letter-headed paper for authentication and must clearly state:
 - dates and duration of any illness – these must be relevant to the dates of the assessment for which the claim is being made
 - the likely impact of the illness on the student's study and assessments
- iii) A police crime report detailing an incident. Crime Reference Numbers alone will not be accepted.
- iv) A supporting letter from the University Counselling Service or an external counselling service which includes confirmation that the student has been in receipt of counselling support over a period of time.
- v) A supporting letter from Student Support and Wellbeing.
- vi) Evidence confirming the student's status as a Carer accompanied by evidence indicating the impact of this responsibility at the time of the assessment.
- vii) Official confirmation from the relevant national/international body or performance coach of dates of an external activity at a national or international level accompanied by a letter confirming Faculty approval.

5.4 Where a student is unsure about what evidence to provide advice should be sought from their Faculty Student Services Office⁷.

5.5 Provision will be made for students who consider their circumstances to be sensitive or personal such that they do not wish to disclose them through the standard procedure. Details are provided in the Guidance for Students on Extenuating Circumstances, Fit to Sit, Extensions and Late Submission⁸.

5.6 Evidence from University Academic staff will be considered when accompanied by additional independent evidence.

5.7 The absence of valid independent evidence will result the application being rejected.

5.8 In cases where a student has become unwell during an exam/test the invigilators report will be obtained by the Faculty Student Services Office. The student will also be expected to provide medical evidence to support their claim wherever possible.

5.9 Where there is doubt about the authenticity of the evidence supplied the student may be asked to provide the original documentation. Students should retain the original copy of any documentation submitted as part of their claim.

5.10 Where there is reason to believe a student has provided falsified or fraudulent documentation in support of an extenuating circumstances claim the matter will be referred to the Conduct and Appeals Unit for investigation under the Student Code of

⁷ Contact details for Faculty Student Services are available at: <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/current-students/student-support/faculty-student-services/>

⁸ University of Wolverhampton Guidance for Students on Extenuating Circumstances, Fit to Sit, Extensions and Late Submission, available at <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/about-us/governance/legal-information/policies-and-regulations/>

Conduct and Disciplinary⁹ procedure.

6 The Extenuating Circumstances Procedure

- 6.1 The deadline for the submission of an extenuating circumstances claim is the day of the examination or due date for the assessment.
- 6.2 Students whose extenuating circumstances arise only on the day of an exam/test/practical may submit an extenuating circumstances claim on the day.
- 6.3 Where a student is unable to formally apply for extenuating circumstances themselves, for example due to serious illness, wherever possible someone acting on their behalf should contact the relevant Faculty Student Services Office to notify them of the situation as soon as possible.
- 6.4 Extenuating circumstances claims must be made through eVision.
- 6.5 Students have a maximum of 10 working days¹⁰ to submit electronic copies of the supporting evidence via eVision or to provide these to their Faculty Student Services Office.
- 6.6 Where no evidence is provided within the deadline the claim will be rejected, unless the student provides evidence of good reason for the delay and keeps the Faculty Student Services Office informed of the situation.
- 6.7 Incomplete claims will be rejected.
- 6.8 Students are expected to make use of the leave of absence process if their studies are likely to be significantly interrupted.
- 6.9 Extenuating circumstances claims submitted after the deadline, known as “retrospective claims” will not normally be accepted unless there are **exceptionally compelling** reasons for the claim not being submitted at the appropriate time. Examples of exceptionally compelling reasons include acute serious illness which affected the student’s ability to engage with the university or where there is evidence that their judgement at the time was impaired.
- 6.10 Retrospective claims will not be considered where:
 - i) The student states they were unaware of the procedure
 - ii) The student has submitted the assessment (see Section 3 Fit to Sit).
- 6.11 Students who have exceptionally compelling reasons for not having made a claim at the appropriate time are required to submit a claim via eVision within 10 working days⁸ of the submission/exam date with evidence which supports the claim and which demonstrates the exceptionally compelling reason they were unable to submit a claim at the appropriate time.
- 6.12 Retrospective claims submitted later than 10 working days after the submission/exam date will not be considered through the extenuating circumstances procedure.

⁹ University of Wolverhampton Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure, available at <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/current-students/conduct-and-appeals/student-conduct/>

¹⁰ Working days are Monday to Friday, excluding any period where the University is closed.

Students who can evidence that there were **exceptionally compelling** reasons for submitting a claim beyond this deadline may do so through the University Academic Appeals¹¹ procedure no later than 20 working days after the publication of results.

7 The Decision

- 7.1 Claims will be reviewed by the Faculty Student Records Coordinator or their nominee.
- 7.2 In circumstances where the claim is complex or where there is a pattern of repeated claims the claim may be referred to a Senior Tutor.
- 7.3 Decisions will be based on the evidence and information provided by the student.
- 7.4 The student and the module leader will be notified of the outcome of the claim via email within **5** working days of the evidence being submitted. The decision will also be published on eVision.
- 7.5 Where the claim is successful the student will be required to submit the assessment at the next available opportunity. This will normally be within the same academic year, unless the claim is for a resit assessment in which case it is likely that the next available opportunity will be the next time that the module runs, in the following academic year.
- 7.6 Where extenuating circumstances are approved for a first attempt at an assessment the next attempt will be graded as a first attempt as defined in the Academic Regulations¹¹.
- 7.7 Where extenuating circumstances are approved for a resit assessment the grade will be capped in accordance with the Academic Regulations¹².
- 7.8 Where extenuating circumstances are approved on an assessment that has been submitted/sat, in accordance with the Fit to Sit policy, this will normally be taken as a declaration that the student considers themselves fit to do so. The extenuating circumstances claim will be made void and the work will be marked and a grade awarded.
- 7.9 Where extenuating circumstances are not approved and the student does not submit/sit the assessment a non-submission grade will be recorded in accordance with the Academic Regulations.
- 7.10 Where extenuating circumstances are not approved and the student submits/sits the assessment the work will be marked and a grade awarded.

8 APPEALS

- 8.1 Students have the right to appeal against an extenuating circumstances decision. Appeals should be submitted via a Faculty Student Services helpdesk call in eVision. The appeal should include details of why the student does not consider the original

¹¹ University of Wolverhampton Regulations and Procedure for Academic Appeals, available at <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/current-students/conduct-and-appeals/academic-appeals/>

¹² University of Wolverhampton Academic Regulations, available at <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/about-us/governance/legal-information/policies-and-regulations/academic-regulations/>

decision to be fair and reasonable based on the evidence they submitted and should be supported by any additional information or evidence that the student has.

- 8.2 Appeals must be submitted within 10 working days of the email confirming the original decision.
- 8.3 Appeals will be considered by the Deputy Faculty Registrar or a nominee who has had no previous involvement with the claim. The appeal outcome will be notified to student and the module leader via email within 10 working days.
- 8.4 Students who remain dissatisfied with an extenuating circumstances decision can escalate their appeal through the Academic Appeals procedure. The deadline for any such appeal is 20 working days after notification of the outcome of the first appeal.

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