



College

USP Higher Education Extenuating Circumstances Policy [for Pearson HND Courses]

Policy Details	
Policy Owner	Head of Higher Education
Date produced	May 2022
Approved by	Policies & Procedures Committee
Date approved	May 2023
To be reviewed	Annually
Publication	4Policies
Version	V3.0

Introduction

USP College is committed to supporting its students. This policy is designed to support those students who experience an unforeseen circumstance during their studies, which severely impacts on their learning, in particular their assessments.

The USP Higher Education Extenuating Circumstances Policy is only to be used for courses where USP College is the registering body and where unforeseen serious circumstances which occur and impact on the student's ability to comply with the demands of assessment. These are circumstances which are exceptional for the individual student, are beyond that student's control and for which there is sufficient evidence to show that they had a significant adverse impact on the student's performance in an assessment or resulted in non-attendance or a non-submission for a scheduled assessment.

The core principle behind the USP Higher Education Extenuating Circumstances Policy is the 'fit to sit' rule. By taking an assessment, a student declares themselves fit to take it; any claim for extenuating circumstances relating to that assessment shall not normally be considered.

The USP Higher Education Extenuating Circumstances Policy is not intended to resolve normal, but perhaps difficult circumstances associated with academic study. For example, a number of students experience and report 'examination stress' which might manifest itself in feelings of anxiety, feeling sick or being unable to sleep. It is not unusual for students to feel anxious, worried, or stressed while they are studying hard and preparing for examinations and assessment, so these types of circumstances will not be addressed by this policy.

Claims made for Extenuating Circumstances will be considered independently and impartially by the Extenuating Circumstances and Late Work Board who will advise the Assessment Board.

Policy and Procedure

1. How does USP College define 'Extenuating Circumstances'?

- 1.1 Extenuating circumstances are formally defined as **“circumstances beyond the student's control of a medical, practical or personal nature which cause the student to perform less well in their coursework or examinations than they might otherwise have been expected to do (on the basis of other work).”**
- 1.2 In general, extenuating circumstances will be genuine emergencies of a medical, personal or practical nature affecting the student for any significant period of time and/or during the assessment and examination period.
- 1.3 It is important to realise that only the most serious extenuating circumstances will have any significant impact on student's overall performance, particularly when qualification classifications are being considered, as these are normally based on 1 to 2 years' work. Therefore, the Assessment Board is **unlikely to take any action** unless it believes that the extenuating circumstances have had a material effect.
- 1.4 An assessment board (Boards) can only make judgements about the impact of extenuating circumstances in light of evidence provided by the student in relation to academic ability demonstrated in non-affected work.
- 1.5 Boards cannot make judgements about student's potential to have gained a higher mark if there is no evidence in the rest of the student's performance to support this. Furthermore, unless it appears that the extenuating circumstances have had a material effect on academic results, the assessment board is unlikely to take any action. Students are advised to consider this carefully before submitting a form.

Note: Students with disabilities or special learning difficulties such as dyslexia may be entitled to an additional allocation of time in a written examination or equivalent alternative methods of assessment. Such arrangements should be agreed in advance with Learning Support. Extenuating Circumstances forms should not be used as an alternative to these arrangements.

2. How do Students inform the Assessment Board?

- 2.1 It is the ***student's responsibility*** to inform the Assessment Board about extenuating circumstances. Although students may have previously discussed their difficulties with staff in their course, this does not in itself constitute the submission of extenuating circumstances.
- 2.2 Students wishing to make a claim need to complete an USP Higher Education Extenuating Circumstances Form which can be downloaded from the USP website or Course Moodle page. This must be returned to the Higher Education Student Advisor by the published deadline. USP College is unable to guarantee that Extenuating Circumstances claim forms submitted after the published deadline will be referred to the Assessment Board.
- 2.3 Students are asked to note that it is essential to inform the Board of any extenuating circumstances ***before*** it meets. It is not possible to subsequently appeal against academic results on the grounds of extenuating circumstances if it could reasonably have been expected to inform the Board in advance.
- 2.4 Students are also responsible for explaining fully the impact of extenuating circumstances on their work. If this is not sufficiently explained, then it is not possible to subsequently appeal and ask the Board to consider additional information.

3. What is an Assessment Board?

- 3.1 The primary purpose of Assessment Board is to check the accuracy of the recording of grades and approve the results of assessments and decide on matters of student progression and the recommendation of awards (i.e., diplomas, certificates), together with classification, at HND level. The Assessment Board has powers of discretion to determine, subject to limitations defined in the Assessment Regulations, repeat assessment requirements (where a student cannot progress or is not eligible for an award) and exclusion on academic grounds.
- 3.2 The Assessment Board shall consider each student in turn and make decisions about progression and recommendations of awards. The board will quality check the students physical course work against the student's grade transcripts, to ensure that student work is an accurate reflection of the recommended award. The Board will determine requirements for retrieval of failure, confirm details of deferred assessment and the decisions possible following completion of that deferred assessment, or it will exclude students from a programme of study.
- 3.3 Copies of Extenuating Circumstances forms will not be circulated to all members of the Assessment Board but may be made available – unless specifically requested otherwise - to the Chair of the Board. The External Examiner may also have to be consulted.
- 3.4 USP College recognises that information relating to extenuating circumstances may be sensitive and great care will be taken over the confidentiality of all information supplied.

4. How much information do I need to include?

- 4.1 Information should be included on the form which details the specific coursework or exams affected by the extenuating circumstances.

4.2 It is important that the student explains the impact these circumstances have had on academic performance. It is not the role of the Assessment Board to try to work this out or to seek further information. Submissions should be *clear* and *concise* so that Boards can determine whether the circumstances are likely to have *significantly* affected academic performance.

5. What documentary evidence do I need to provide?

5.1 The responsibility for providing evidence to support a claim for Extenuating Circumstances rests entirely with the student at all times. USP College reserves the right to verify the evidence submitted without the prior notification.

5.2 Evidence presented by the student for Extenuating Circumstances must meet the following standards:

- a. be written by appropriately qualified professionals who are independent to the student. Evidence supplied by Learning Support Services, College Counsellors, Course Managers and Programme Area staff may be acceptable providing it is not merely confirming student self-diagnosis.
- b. be on headed notepaper and signed and dated by the author. E-mail correspondence may be acceptable providing it has been sent from a verifiable source such as the author's organisation.
- c. be dated at the times the reported Extenuating Circumstances took place and not gathered retrospectively.
- d. be the original work, written in English, not a photocopy and be unaltered by the student.

5.3 Acceptable circumstances

- a. Table 1 on the following page provides typical but not definitive examples of the sorts of circumstances which may be considered Extenuating, providing they are supported by evidence as described above.

Table 1: Indicative examples of acceptable circumstances (if accompanied by appropriate supporting evidence)

Indicative Example	Typical Evidence
Significant short-term physical illness or injury;	Original medical certificate. Letter from appropriate medical Professional or Doctors letter confirming the nature of the illness and the likely impact on the student's ability to undertake assessment.
Significant short-term mental ill-health;	Original medical certificate. Letter from appropriate medical Professional or Doctors letter confirming the nature of the illness and the likely impact on the student's ability to undertake assessment.
A long-term or chronic physical health condition, which has recently worsened temporarily or permanently;	Original medical certificate. Letter from appropriate medical Professional or Doctors letter confirming the nature of the illness and the likely impact on the student's ability to undertake assessment.

A long-term or chronic mental health condition, which has recently worsened temporarily or permanently;	Original medical certificate. Letter from appropriate medical Professional or Doctors letter confirming the nature of the illness and the likely impact on the student's ability to undertake assessment.
Medical Illness of Long and Short-term nature which has developed after enrolment and has a SEVERE impact on work;	Original medical certificate. Letter from appropriate medical Professional or Doctors letter confirming the nature of the illness and the likely impact on the student's ability to undertake assessment.
Bereavement of Close relative or demonstrably close relationship;	Death certificate or letter confirming details from an independent person. Evidence of the relationship to the student.
Acute personal emotional circumstances / A long-term relationship breakdown, such as a marriage;	Original medical certificate. Letter from appropriate medical Professional. Letter from College Counsellor providing independent diagnosis (rather than supporting self-diagnosis) and confirming the likely impact on the student's ability.
Hospitalisation;	A medical certificate or letter from the relevant hospital confirming the nature and severity of the student's circumstances and the student's ability to undertake formal assessment.
Family Illness;	A medical certificate or letter from an independent medical professional confirming the nature and severity of the family circumstances and the ability of the student to undertake formal assessment.
Victim of Crime;	A written statement of events which is supported by written evidence from the police including a crime reference number, medical certificate or letter form an appropriate medical professional or a letter from the College Counselling service and confirming what impact the crime has had on the student ability to undertake formal assessment.
Representing USP College at a National event or another National activity.	A letter from the organising body explaining the national importance of the event.

5.4 If you have a long-term illness which was diagnosed before you enrolled or if you are registered disabled, you should receive appropriate support while on the course. These are not considered as extenuating circumstances. USP College supports students with long-term or chronic health conditions, including mental ill-health, if a student is deemed to be disabled as defined by the Equality Act 2010, by putting in place a 'Support Plan' to provide reasonable adjustments to study and assessment support arrangements. Students are responsible for contacting Learning Support to discuss the adjustments and support that they need.

5.5 Where a student has received reasonable adjustments in recognition of a long-term or chronic health condition, the assessment board would not support a case for extenuating circumstances in relation to the condition, unless the condition has worsened significantly (whether temporarily or permanently) during the period relating to the extenuating circumstances case. Where a student submits an extenuating circumstance case on the basis that there has been a significant change in their circumstances, they must provide evidence regarding this change in their condition. Where a student has had reasonable opportunity to contact Learning Support to discuss the adjustments they need for a long-term or chronic health condition, but has not done so, the assessment board would not support a case for extenuating circumstances in relation to the condition.

5.6 Where students submit repeated requests for extenuating circumstances relating to the same health condition, the assessment board should advise them to discuss the adjustments and support that they need with Learner Support.

6. What circumstances are NOT taken into account?

6.1 It is not possible to list every circumstance that the Assessment Board would not accept or take into account. However, some of the more obvious examples are listed below

Table 2: Unacceptable circumstances

Nature of Circumstance	Explanation
A long-term or chronic health condition (including mental ill-health) which has not worsened recently, or for which the College has already made a reasonable adjustment	A long-term problem or illness which has not worsened during the year, and which is not deemed to have had an overall effect on your performance will not be considered as extenuating.
Transport issues	Students are expected to organise their own transport requirements to ensure they arrive for assessment or to hand in assignments on time. On rare occasions breakdowns in public transport or severe delays on the road network which can be evidenced may be considered.
Pre-booked holidays	Assessment dates and times are published in advance and students are expected to arrange their holidays around those times. This includes resit examinations and submissions.
Accommodation issues	Students are responsible for providing their own accommodation, including in and around periods of examination and assessment.
Missing an examination because you mis-read the exam timetable overslept or had personal transport difficulties close to the deadline for submission	It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they know and remember when and where examinations are taking place and when and where work has to be submitted.
Paid employment or voluntary work	It is expected that students will arrange work so that it does not conflict with examination and assessments.
Examination stress and general pressure of work (unless this contributes to ill-health)	Feeling under the weather/below par prior to examinations is not an unusual experience. It is not an extenuating circumstance.

	<p>General pressure of work is not taken to be circumstances beyond your control, as you are expected to plan your work schedule;</p> <p>Doing more than one examination in one day is regarded as normal in academia and has to be managed by the student.</p>
IT / computer failure	<p>Loss or corruption of files is not an acceptable reason. Students are responsible for providing their own back up and ensuring they leave enough time to print multiple copies of work prior to submission.</p> <p>Difficulties with information technology, e.g., computers, printers, memory sticks, disks, network access and the absence of backup copies.</p> <p>The Assessment Board will assume you will have planned your work to take into account potential IT problems and printing time, building in time in your schedule planning to accommodate delay.</p>
A minor short-term illness or injury (e.g., a common cold), which would not reasonably have had a significant adverse impact on assessment	<p>A short-term problem or illness which has occurred during the year, and which is not deemed to have had an overall effect on your performance will not be considered as extenuating.</p> <p>Short term illnesses, such as the common cold, while uncomfortable rarely contribute to significant impact on assessed work.</p>
Death or injury to a pet.	Death or injury to a pet will not be seen as extenuating.

7. How are extenuating circumstances judged by an Assessment Board?

7.1 Boards try to determine whether, and to what extent, extenuating circumstances have affected the student's academic performance, and determine what action, if any, can be taken. In assessing the significance of extenuating circumstances, Assessment Boards will treat each case on its individual merits. The Board considers:

- a. the severity of the problem and the length of time involved;
- b. any supporting independent documentary evidence;
- c. whether all work in the same period appears to have been equally affected;
- d. whether it is possible to gauge the effect of the extenuating circumstances upon academic performance.
- e. the type of assessment affected, and how long you had to complete the work (i.e., date when the work was set and the deadline for submission).
- f. Assessment Board cannot estimate potential.

8. What action can the Assessment Board take?

8.1 The Board will try to ensure a fair result based on the student's overall performance. Grades for individual modules are confirmed by the Modular Examinations Board (the Board) concerned. The Board may decide to allow refer examinations, or for assessments to be treated as a first sit with no penalty applied. All action will comply with the Pearson guidance for the Quality Assurance of Higher Nation provision.

9. What action will NOT be taken by Boards of Examiners?

9.1 Boards of Examiners will not:

- a. permit a student who presents extenuating circumstances to proceed to the next year of study if they have not met the necessary requirements, unless the Board are satisfied that it is appropriate to do so on academic grounds;

- b. award a higher grading if the board is not satisfied that this is a fair result based on the student's demonstrated academic performance;
- c. annotate statement of results/transcripts with comments about the existence of extenuating circumstances.

10. False Claims

10.1 You should note that submitting a false claim could be regarded as an attempt to gain unfair advantage, which would be an academic offence and could be dealt with under the Student Disciplinary Policy.

11. General Data Protection Regulation (2016)

11.1 By submitting an extenuating circumstance form you are agreeing to USP College holding this personal data for the purposes of processing your claim. The College will hold and process this data in accordance with its obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (2016). The information will only be shared it with staff and External Examiners who have a legitimate need to access the information in order to consider the student's case or to provide students with support.

12. Equality Act 2010

12.1 We strongly urge you to disclose any persistent medical condition, specific learning difficulty or disability to Learning Support so that support can be provided as necessary.

13. General Practitioner Practices

13.1 In some cases, General Practitioner (GP) practices may ask students to obtain written confirmation from the College that it requires medical documentation to support requests for consideration of Extenuating Circumstances. In this case you should contact the HE student Advisor. Any fee charged by a GP practice for the provision of medical documentation needs to be paid by the student. If students are in financial hardship and are not able to pay any fees for these GP letters, they should be encouraged to contact Student Services.

14. Outcomes from Extenuating Circumstances Applications

14.1 Accepting Extenuating Circumstances/Mitigation

A	Accepted – circumstances meet the grounds for EC and the board is satisfied with the supporting evidence. A recommendation based on the severity of the impairment suffered by the student is indicated by the alpha-numeric codes described below.
PA	Provisionally accepted – student has referred to difficulties in obtaining evidence but based on the description of the circumstances the request is approved pending the evidence being provided (submission date must be before the Assessment Board in which the EC is considered). A recommendation based on the severity of the impairment suffered by the student is indicated by the alpha-numeric codes described below but it would not be applied if the requested evidence is not presented to support the claim.
N	Not accepted – circumstances provided by the student are not regarded as grounds for EC under the Policy on Extenuating Circumstances. The following codes may be helpful as part of the process of providing feedback to students.
N1	Not accepted - supporting evidence does not cover the relevant period.
N2	Not accepted - supporting evidence not supplied by an appropriate source
N3	Not accepted - evidence is deemed insufficient to support the student's claim of seriousness of impact on their assessment performance.

N4	Not accepted - wording of evidence supplied does not support the student's claim e.g., the material does not provide a medical diagnosis.
N5	Not accepted – no evidence is provided, and the student has not given any explanation as to the reasons why nor indicated when evidence could be available.
N6	Not accepted - the evidence relates to a chronic condition which the student is already in receipt of support from the Student Support & Welfare. This does not include instances where the student has an acute flare up of a pre-existing condition which may be accepted if properly evidenced. This decision should always be confirmed by the SS &W, as there are occasions when the support available will not be able to fully mitigate the student's need.
N7	Not accepted - evidence relates to a condition or circumstance previously used to claim mitigation where the Panel, on the earlier occasion, instructed the student that this mitigation could not be used again and may have instructed the student to obtain support from SS &W. This decision should always be confirmed by the SS&W as some conditions will inevitably recur, sometimes without warning and mitigation may still be relevant.

14.2 Applying (EC) Mitigation - Coursework

Code Recommendation

C1	Coursework to be submitted as a first attempt (deferral) in the next possible reassessment period appropriate to the course.
C2	Coursework to be submitted as a reassessment (referral) in the next possible reassessment period appropriate to the course.
C3	A reasonable extension to coursework to be granted within an assessment period (new deadline will need to be stated). This would include the removal of any late submission penalties imposed.

- a. If feedback for coursework has been provided to a course cohort EC Panels may request that the course scheme manager sets a new coursework question.

14.3 Applying (EC) Mitigation - Examinations

Code Recommendation

E1	Exam to be taken as a first attempt (deferral) in the next possible reassessment period appropriate to the course.
E2	Exam to be taken as a reassessment (referral) in the next possible reassessment period appropriate to the course.

15. Where can I get more guidance?

15.1 If after having read these notes you feel you need more help in putting forward your extenuating circumstances, you should contact HE Student Advisor or Programme Leader.

Appendix 1 EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES FORM

<https://forms.office.com/r/CT1B3nAbi3>



College

EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES FORM – CONFIDENTIAL

NAME:	
STUDENT ID NO:	
COURSE/AWARD TITLE:	

This form should be completed if you want to make the Assessment Board aware of any extenuating circumstances which you believe may have adversely affected your performance either in assessed work or in examinations. Further information and deadlines for submission are contained in your Course Handbook. Please read the notes for guidance before completing the sections which apply to you.

It is important to realise that only the most serious extenuating circumstances are likely to have a significant effect on your overall results. Please take time to assess your situation carefully and only submit details of extenuating circumstances if you are sure that they have **significantly** affected the quality of your work. Remember that the Assessment Board will be looking at the affected work in the context of the rest of your work throughout the year(s) and is unlikely to take extenuating circumstances into account unless it is apparent that the work in question is of a significantly lower standard. **If you believe your work is affected in more than one semester, a separate copy of this form must be submitted for each semester.**

Return this form as soon as possible to the relevant office. Forms must have been submitted with any accompanying documentation by the published deadlines. We cannot guarantee that forms handed in after the deadlines will be considered by an Assessment Board.

a) DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE: List below the documentation which you have attached in support of your claim. Examples of evidence include: - A medical certificate; a letter from a medical practitioner; death certificate; birth certificate; a statement from a member of staff, e.g., Course Manager or Personal Tutor. ***Please note that USP College will not contact third parties on your behalf to obtain evidence.***

List the evidence:

d) EXAMINATIONS: If you believe your performance in examinations was significantly impaired, or you were absent from an examination or invigilated test, please state the dates and names of the affected examination(s) and describe how they were affected or give the reason for your absence. **Medical evidence must be provided in cases of absence due to illness*

Exam(s) Affected (Module Title & Code)	Date	Exam(s)	Details of Extenuating Circumstances/Reason for Absence
			<i>Explain the circumstances / give your reason for not attending:</i>

I confirm that the information I have given is true, and that I have read and understood the guidelines on extenuating circumstances. I agree that the information supplied may be disclosed as set out in the Extenuating Circumstances Guidelines

I agree by undertaking an assessment, I am declaring myself fit to take it; any claim for extenuating circumstances relating to that assessment will not normally be considered.

BEFORE YOU SIGN THIS FORM:

Have you attached independent evidence to support your claim? (Your claim cannot be considered unless you have included supporting evidence and will be delayed until it is provided).

Evidence attached:

SIGNED:

DATED:

<p>For official use only: Completed Form received by (signed) _____ on: _____</p>

Equality and Diversity Statement & Impact Assessment

USP College is committed to equality of opportunity. The aim is to create an environment in which people treat each other with mutual respect, regardless of: age, disability, family responsibility, marital status, race, colour, ethnicity, nationality, religion or belief, gender, gender identity, transgender, sexual orientation, trade union activity or unrelated criminal convictions.

This form should be used by managers and policy owners within their area of responsibility to carry out Equality and Diversity Impact Assessments (EDIAs) in relation to protected characteristics including, but not limited to: Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage and civil partnership, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion and belief, Sex, Sexual orientation. The word 'policy' is taken to include strategies, policies, procedures and guidance notes; both formal and informal, internal and external.

1. Name of Policy

USP Higher Education Extenuating Circumstances Policy for Pearson HND courses

2. Which of the following groups could be affected by this policy?

(Tick all that apply)

Students	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wider Community	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Complaints

Have complaints been received from anyone with one or more protected characteristic about the service provided? If yes then please give details.

4. The Impact

Four possible impacts should be considered as part of the assessment:

- a. **Positive Impact** - Where the policy might have a positive impact on a particular protected characteristic.
- b. **None or Little Impact** – Where you think a policy does not disadvantage any of the protected characteristics
- c. **Some Impact** – Where a policy might disadvantage any of the protected characteristics groups to some extent. This disadvantage may be also differential in the sense that where the negative impact on one particular group of individuals with protected characteristic is likely to be greater than on another.
- d. **Substantial Impact** – Where you think that the policy could have a negative impact on any or all of the protected characteristics. This disadvantage may be also differential in the sense that the negative impact on one particular protected characteristic is likely to be greater than on another.

Thought-provoking questions, which might help come to a decision about the impact of a policy on individuals with protected characteristics:

- e. Does policy outcomes and service take up differ between people with different protected characteristics?
- f. What key information do we have? Does data or engagement with people with protected characteristics give insights into areas of disadvantage, which relate to the policy area?
- g. If the policy is likely to have a negative impact on individuals, sharing particular characteristics what steps can be taken to mitigate these effects?
- h. Will the policy deliver practical benefits for certain groups?
- i. Does the policy miss opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and foster good understanding/relationships between groups?
- j. Do other policies need to change to make this policy more effective?
- k. Is there any elements of the policy that could be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010?

Use the guidance provided above and complete the following table: **(Please Tick ✓)**

Gender/Age	Positive Impact	No or Little Impact	Some Adverse Impact	Substantial Adverse Impact
Gender		✓		
Age		✓		
Disability	Positive Impact	No or Little Impact	Some Adverse Impact	Substantial Adverse Impact
Visually Impaired		✓		
Hearing impaired		✓		
Physical Disability		✓		
Specific Learning Difficulties		✓		
Global Learning Difficulties		✓		
Autistic Spectrum Disorder		✓		
Any other disability – Various		✓		
Other Factors	Positive Impact	No or Little Impact	Some Adverse Impact	Substantial Adverse Impact
Race		✓		
Culture		✓		
Religious Belief		✓		
Sexual Orientation		✓		
Gender Reassignment	✓			
Marriage/Civil Partnership		✓		
Pregnancy /Maternity /Paternity	✓			

Please comment on any areas where some or substantial impact is indicated. Any resulting actions must be added to the below action plan.

5. Is there anything that cannot be changed?

What cannot be changed?	Can this be justified?	If so, how?
Not applicable		
E.g., Disabled people can be treated more favorably under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. If a policy appears to treat disabled people more favorably than other equality groups, the disadvantage may be justifiable		

Please list the main actions that you plan to take as a result of this assessment in your area of responsibility. (Continue on separate sheets as necessary)

<p>Action Plan:</p>
