

EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

Welcome to Advice Direct..., the Advice and Representation Centre's (ARC) written information service.

This leaflet is to inform students on the University's procedures that relate to extenuating circumstances, and the support available to students throughout the process.

What are Extenuating Circumstances?

During your time at the University there is a chance you could become ill or experience other personal circumstances (such as a bereavement or an accident) which affect your academic performance when completing coursework or sitting examinations.

Extenuating Circumstances are your opportunity to inform your department of any problems and the extent to which they have affected your performance.

The Board of Examiners, dependent on the severity of your circumstances, will take the extenuating circumstances that you submit into account when making recommendations about your progress or results.

Extenuating Circumstances could include:- significant illness or injuries, a family crisis, exceptional financial hardship, or anything that has a significantly adverse impact on your studies – if in doubt please contact the ARC as quickly as possible.

The University sets out the role of extenuating circumstances in its [Code of Practice on Extenuating Circumstances and Fit To Sit Procedure](#), and further information about the process is available from this Code.

What will I need to do?

The University, Schools and Departments will have **published deadlines** for the submission of extenuating circumstances, you should make sure you familiarise yourself with those dates. In some cases, you may only have an exceptionally short timeframe in which to gather evidence and submit the relevant forms.

The University places the responsibility to ensure that deadlines are met on you, the student.

Although extenuating circumstances can relate to a variety of points within your studies – coursework, tests, formal examinations, etc – you should always complete the University's Extenuating Circumstances Form (see the link below) taking time to include all relevant details and factors.

Notification of Extenuating Circumstances Form:-

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/studentservices/conduct/documents/public/extcircsform.pdf>

Your submission must include **supporting third party evidence** of your circumstances for it to be successful. As with all University procedures this must be **legible and in English**. Anything in a foreign language must be translated beforehand and a certified copy of the translation enclosed with your Extenuating Circumstances Form ("ECF").

Evidence can include a doctor's letter confirming ill health, a death certificate in relation to bereavement, a letter from a Solicitor or other relevant professional, or a medical certificate from a Counsellor.

Your third party evidence should include all relevant detail, and should not rely on the University contacting the provider for further details. **The University will not contact any of your evidence providers for further information/clarification.**

Remember, all information contained within the ECF will be confidential and the University will not normally accept reasons such as “the information was of a private nature” or “family reasons” for failing to submit an ECF or not including all relevant information.

You have the option of submitting your ECF and evidence in a sealed envelope addressed to the “Chair of the Extenuating Circumstances Panel” as an added layer of confidentiality.

If you are in doubt about how to complete the form or whether your evidence is in the required format, please contact the ARC in advance of your School's deadline for the submission of extenuating circumstances.

What happens after submission?

Following submission of your ECF, there 4 different options open to the School/Department to consider:-

1. **Extensions for coursework or in-year assessments** – following submission of your form and evidence any coursework submission deadline or date of completion for in-year assessments will be varied allowing for the impact of the circumstances to be minimised.
2. **Other action for coursework or in-year assessments** – there may be cases where an extension will not be appropriate. In those cases the School may:
 - a) provide guidance to allow **a small element of coursework or in-year assessments to be disregarded**, with the final mark(s) being recalculated from the remaining elements of coursework or in-year assessment;
 - b) implement guidance to accommodate those situations where one component of the module is missing, **to allow for the final mark(s) being recalculated from the remaining module component(s)**;

- c) implement such **other action which has been approved by the College Director of Education** or nominee prior to the commencement of the academic session.
3. **Deferral of Examinations** – under the “Fit to Sit Procedure” discussed below, students may be able to defer examinations prior to sitting examinations.
 4. **Extenuating Circumstances Panel** – In all other circumstances the student is advised to submit the ECF below the deadline, for it to be considered at a Extenuating Circumstances Panel.

Please seek further advice from the ARC Advisors if you are unsure which of the above options should be applicable to you, or the process to be followed.

The Fit to Sit Procedure

As part of the new Code of Practice on Extenuating Circumstances, the University has introduced a “fit to sit” process.

At any point **up to the start time of your examination**, you can request a deferral of your examination to your School’s Extenuating Circumstances Officer (ECO) or an identified designated individual.

This request will include:

- (i) A completed extenuating circumstances form.**
- (ii) All relevant evidence in support of your circumstances.**

If, for example on Saturdays, neither the ECO nor an identified designated person is available, you must contact the University’s Examination Office regarding the deferral request.

Following submission of the above material the ECO (or appropriate other) will either **(i)** accept the deferral and you will not be required to attend the examination, **(ii)** accept the deferral pending further agreed evidence being submitted within 5 working days, or **(iii)** reject the deferral request and you will be required to start/rejoin the examination at that time.

Please be aware that at the beginning of each examination the Senior Invigilator will make an announcement regarding the Fit to Sit procedure. **If you remain in the room following this announcement, you declare yourself fit to sit the examination**, and only in exceptional circumstances will you be able to successfully submit extenuating circumstances. Please seek further advice from the ARC if you are in doubt.

Sources Of Help

Advice & Representation Centre (ARC), Guild of Students

Email: thearc@guild.bham.ac.uk

Visit the website at: <http://www.guildofstudents.com/thearc>

Advice & Representation Centre Opening Hours (Term Time)*

Monday - Friday

Diagnostic Drop In Clinics

Saturday & Sunday

10am — 4pm

12-2pm (exc. Wed 2-4pm)

CLOSED

***Vacation Periods**

12 noon – 2pm

Appeals:

Email: appeals@contacts.bham.ac.uk

Website: <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/registry/policy/complaint-appeal/index.aspx>

Extenuating Circumstances and Fit to Sit

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/student services/conduct/extcircs/index.aspx>

Notification of Extenuating Circumstances Form

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/student services/conduct/documents/public/extcircsform.pdf>

Code of Practice on Extenuating Circumstances and Fit to Sit Procedures

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/legal/extenuating-circumstances.pdf>

Disclaimer: The information on this leaflet only provides general guidance on academic support and University policy. The leaflet should not be regarded or relied upon as a complete or authoritative statement of University policy or procedures. The ARC will not accept any liability for any claims or inconvenience as a result of the use of information on this leaflet.

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Published By Advice & Representation Centre,
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[extenuating circumstances]