

RG47 Postgraduate Extenuating Circumstances Policy		Effective date: 03/2024
Authorised owner: Katie Hickin	Department(s) / Project team(s): PEDaL	Last revision: 03/2024
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Postgraduate Extenuating Circumstances Policy

1 Introduction

This policy applies to all modules run by Real Group Ltd as part of a postgraduate programme validated by Middlesex University.

Extenuating circumstances are unforeseen or exceptional personal circumstances which have affected a delegate's/participant's performance in an assessment, or reassessment, and are brought to the attention of the programme assessment board or progression board. A programme assessment board or progression board is able to grant various remedies for extenuating circumstances that meet the requirements laid out in this policy such as a deferral of an assessment deadline to the next suitable submission point, a short extension to an assessment deadline, or allowing for a retrospective extension to an assessment deadline to be granted.

This policy is not intended to be used to mitigate any disadvantages faced by delegates/participants due to disabilities or other long-term support requirements, as outlined in *RG51 Reasonable Adjustments Policy*. However, a disabled delegate/participant may need to submit an extenuating circumstances claim if, for example, they experience an acute episode or worsening of their condition which means that any reasonable adjustments in place are no longer sufficient.

2 Extenuating Circumstances Claims

- a) Any delegate/participant who wishes to submit a request that the programme assessment board or progression board make an allowance for an unforeseen or exceptional personal circumstance which has affected either their performance in an assessment, or their ability to meet an assessment submission deadline, must submit an extenuating circumstances form,

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along with a supporting statement/documentary evidence, prior to the deadline for the assessment that has been affected.

- b) Late submitted forms will only be considered if the delegate/participant was unable or, for valid reasons, unwilling to disclose the circumstances before the deadline and submits documentary evidence to substantiate this.
- c) Delegates/Participants must authorise Real Group and Middlesex University to seek verification of any submitted documentary evidence under the Data Protection Act 2018.

i) All documentary evidence should:

- be dated, and written in English (or accompanied by a certified translation) on official headed paper (a PDF version is acceptable).
- cover the period prior to the submission due date.
- give a broad description of the extenuating circumstances the delegate/participant is experiencing/has experienced.
- describe the impact of the extenuating circumstances on the delegate's/participant's ability to study.

ii) Suitable evidence may include (this list is not exhaustive):

- Medical certification of absence from work.
- Letter from a medical practitioner or counsellor.
- Death certificate, or other formal documentation confirming a bereavement, along with evidence of the delegate's / participant's close relationship to the deceased.
- Letter from a religious leader.
- Governmental letter or notification.

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- Letter from an employer, line manager, or other professional familiar with the circumstances giving rise to the request.

3 Extenuating Circumstances Panels

- a) All extenuating circumstances claims will be reviewed on behalf of the programme assessment board or progression board by an extenuating circumstances panel or, under defined circumstances, by the examinations officer.
- b) Panels consist of at least two staff members, who will review the claim alongside the supporting statement/documentary evidence.
- c) Extenuating circumstance claims must be submitted via the online extenuating circumstances form. Once submitted they will be reviewed and after a decision has been reached this will be communicated to the delegate/participant by email.
 - i) Extenuating circumstances claims will initially be reviewed by the acting examinations officer to ensure they meet the requirements and include any required documentary evidence.
 - ii) In cases where a claim meets a set list of criteria, and the supporting statement/documentary evidence clearly support this, the examinations officer will have delegated authority to grant deferrals and short extensions.
 - iii) In cases where a delegate/participant fails to provide a supporting statement that meets the requirements and/or any required documentary evidence within a communicated timescale, the examinations officer will have delegated authority to reject these claims.
 - iv) All extenuating circumstance claims that are not processed via delegated authority shall be passed to a panel of at least two members of staff for review. At least one of these staff will be a member of the Senior Academic Team. They will recommend the most appropriate course of action for the claim from the following options:
 - (a) Granting a deferral
 - (b) Granting a short extension
 - (c) Noting the extenuating circumstances to aid an assessment board or progression board in its decision making

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- (d) Rejecting the claim
 - v) Once the panel has reviewed a claim the examinations officer will ensure that the recommended course of action is possible within the programme's regulations, and where it is possible process this within Real Group's systems. Where this is not possible, the examinations officer will liaise with the panel to come to the best possible course of action.
 - vi) Should there be a fee to pay relating to an outcome from an extenuating circumstances claim, this must be paid within the timeframe communicated to the delegate/participant when the claim is accepted and no later than one calendar month after the original assessment deadline the claim relates to. Should the fee not be paid, or a payment plan be agreed, by this deadline the outcome of the claim will be changed to rejected.
 - (a) The panel may request any fees relating to an outcome from an extenuating circumstances claim to be waived by making a case for this to the Director of Pedagogy and Learning.
- d) Should an extenuating circumstances panel believe that a deferral should be approved, but this would take the delegate's /participant's period of registration on a programme beyond the maximum allowed, a request will be made to Middlesex University to request an extension to the delegate's / participant's maximum registration period prior to confirmation of the deferral decision.
 - i) The panel needs to be confident that this exceptional additional deferral would enable the delegate/participant to complete the module within the additional time it would provide.
 - ii) Should this request be unsuccessful, the panel will only be able to approve deferrals that fall within the current maximum period of registration.

4 Deferral

- a) When a deferral of an assessment is approved as a result of an extenuating circumstances claim, this will move the delegate's / participant's assessment deadline to be the next available submission point for that module, subject to this not going beyond the maximum allowed period of registration on a programme.

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- b) Sometimes it may be necessary for a delegate / participant to pause their studies for an extended period of time, such as when taking on unexpected caring responsibilities for a close family member, experiencing temporary disability due to ill-health or accident, or while undergoing prolonged medical treatment . In such cases, a deferral may be approved for a period of up to twelve months, subject to this not exceeding the maximum allowed period of registration on a programme.
- c) Delegates / Participants are entitled to be granted up to three deferrals per module, provided that this does not lead to their registration exceeding the maximum programme length specified.
- d) A delegate's / participant's first deferral within a module will not incur any additional fees. Deferrals after the first may have a fee charged for them at the current rate published in the extenuating circumstances form.
- e) No guarantee can be given that, following deferral of an assessment or reassessment beyond the next available submission point after a delegate's / participant's original deadline, the module content and form of assessment will remain unchanged.

5 Short Extensions

- a) When a short extension is approved as a result of an extenuating circumstances claim, this will move the delegate's / participant's assessment deadline to a date no more than two weeks later.
- b) The date and time of the new deadline will be determined by the extenuating circumstances panel or examinations officer, and will be communicated to the delegate/participant when they are informed of the acceptance of their extenuating circumstances claim.
- c) A short extension does not count as a deferral.
- d) Being granted a short extension does not preclude a delegate/participant from then being able to apply for a deferral of this assessment deadline should they experience additional extenuating circumstances beyond those of the original claim that resulted in the short extension.

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6 Extenuating Circumstances Noted for an Assessment Board or Progression Board

- a) All work submitted by delegates / participants for assessment shall be graded on its merits without consideration of any extenuating circumstances known to the marker. Extenuating circumstances will not be used by programme assessment boards or progression boards to alter the assignment grades of delegates / participants.
- b) Where a delegate / participant has successfully completed their assignments, but an extenuating circumstances panel believes these may have been adversely affected by extenuating circumstances, they may have these noted on the delegate's / participant's record and made available to the programme assessment board or progression board to support their decision making process relating to the attainment and progression of the delegate/participant.
- c) In cases where an extenuating circumstances panel has no other suitable options to mitigate the effects of a delegate's/participant's extenuating circumstances, they may have these noted on the delegate's/participant's record and made available to the programme assessment board or progression board to support their decision making process relating to the attainment and progression of the delegate/ participant.
- d) Where a delegate/participant has an extenuating circumstance noted on their record the programme assessment board or progression board will have a range of options available to them to mitigate the effects of the extenuating circumstances:
 - i) Deferral of assessment to the next opportunity. This does not need to adhere to the normal time limits for a deferral.
 - ii) Application of a retrospective deferral.
 - iii) Application of a retrospective extension.
 - iv) Granting permission to repeat some or all of the modules in a stage, subject to payment of the relevant course fees.
 - (a) This may exceptionally include permission to repeat a module that has already been passed. In such cases, the credit achieved at the first attempt will not be counted towards the final qualification.
 - (b) For such a repeated module the grade will not be restricted to the maximum grade at reassessment, unless it is applied as a penalty following a

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delegate/participant being found guilty of academic misconduct. Where a delegate/participant repeats a module, any remaining right of reassessment from the original attempt is cancelled, but the repeated module may be reassessed by resit on one further occasion.

- v) Use discretion in determining the classification for a qualification where the delegate/participant is borderline or there are conflicting classifications in the profiles of grades. In exercising discretion the assessment board should bear in mind the need to be consistent in its policy in the interpretation of classification for all delegates/participants in a cohort.
 - (a) Where the dissertation/independent project is at grade 4 or better, but more than 50 per cent of the remaining credit at FHEQ level 7 (or above) is grade 5 or worse, the delegate/participant will be awarded a Merit unless the assessment board considers that a Distinction is appropriate due to extenuating circumstances.
 - (b) Where the dissertation/independent project is in the range of grades 5 to 8 inclusive but more than 50 per cent of the remaining credit at FHEQ level 7 or above is grade 9 or worse, the delegate/participant will be awarded a Pass unless the assessment board considers that a Merit is appropriate due to extenuating circumstances.
- vi) Consider the delegate/participant for an aegrotat award if it is considered that a diagnosis of a terminal/debilitating illness would prevent them from successful completion of their degree programme and their results whilst studying with Real Group were such that it is reasonable to conclude that the delegate/participant would have successfully completed the course and qualified for the award in question, or an appropriate exit award. A Certificate of Achievement may be awarded where these conditions are not met.
 - (a) The delegate/participant should confirm that they wish to accept an aegrotat award prior to confirmation of the award. Where a delegate/participant does not wish to accept an aegrotat award they may elect to continue with assessment/reassessment as normal.
 - (b) Aegrotat awards do not carry any Classification, and 'Aegrotat' will not be indicated on certificates or diploma supplements.

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7 Appeals

- a) A delegate/participant cannot appeal the decision of an extenuating circumstances panel or examinations officer, on whether or not to accept a claim of extenuating circumstances.
- b) Any extenuating circumstances claims that cannot be submitted prior to an assessment board or progression board will have to be handled via the procedures set out in RG48 Postgraduate Appeals Policy following publication of assessment board or progression board decisions.
- c) Following the publication of assessment board or progression board decisions, a delegate/participant can use the procedures set out in RG48 Postgraduate Appeals Policy to request a review of the decision of the programme assessment board or progression board if there is evidence that either:
 - i) the procedures outlined in this policy were not correctly followed.
 - ii) consideration was not given by an assessment board or progression board to a recommendation put forward by an extenuating circumstances panel.

8 Criteria to be Applied when Assessing an Extenuating Circumstances Claim

- a) For a deferral claim to be approved:
 - It must be submitted via the online extenuating circumstances form
 - It must include a supporting statement outlining the circumstances from which the claim arises, which should clearly demonstrable impact on the delegate's/participant's ability to complete their studies by the due date
 - In cases where a claim is submitted after the deadline for the assessment, documentary evidence must be provided to demonstrate why the delegate/participant was unable or, for valid reasons, unwilling to disclose the circumstances before the deadline.

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b) Extenuating circumstances where an examinations officer will have delegated authority to grant deferrals and short extensions on behalf of an extenuating circumstances panel:

- Short period of ill-health or injury.
- Increase in workload due to unexpected circumstances; such as having to take on additional duties to cover staff shortages or absences, or an unanticipated increase in the number of children presenting with SEND.
- Death of a close relative.
- Serious injury or ill-health of a close relative.
- Unexpected changes to the caring responsibilities of the delegate/participant; such as taking on either temporary or long-term care for a relative, or a significant change occurring in the care requirements for a dependent child.
- Significant detrimental change in personal circumstances; such as divorce, eviction, homelessness, loss of job.
- Catastrophic events; such as flooding, hurricane, fire, volcanic eruption.

Related Documents

RG48 Postgraduate Appeals Policy
 RG51 Reasonable Adjustments Policy

Document history

Issue 1

Initial release