



Union
Theological
College

Extenuating Circumstances Policy for PTFI/Ministry and Deaconess students

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Extenuating Circumstances Policy for PTFI/Ministry and Deaconess students

1. Introduction and Purpose

1.1 During a period of study, students may encounter significant personal difficulties that impact on their ability to study for or complete academic assessment(s), including examinations. The College refers to these personal difficulties as Extenuating Circumstances (EC).

“Extenuating circumstances are defined as serious unforeseen, unpreventable circumstances that significantly disrupt a student’s ability to undertake assessment.”

1.2 In order for such circumstances to be taken account of with regard to assessment, students need to make a timely EC claim, fully supported with documentary evidence. This will enable the College to make an informed decision and ensure appropriate support is offered. This document outlines the policy and procedures required to process an EC claim.

1.3 There are two levels of claim for EC, namely module level and programme level EC claim:

(i) Module Level - short-term situations which require a short delay to the submission of coursework of **no more than 10 working days after the original deadline.**

(ii) Programme Level - longer-term situations which will affect **main examination periods/class tests** and/or a delay to the submission of coursework of **more than 10 working days.**

2. Fit to Sit/Submit Assessment

2.1 The College recognises that there are occasions when students are too ill or otherwise affected by EC to take an assessment. Application of the EC policy will be dependent on the provision of appropriate documentation, and will not normally be applied to students retrospectively.



2.3 The College will **not**¹ ordinarily accept an EC claim once an assignment has been submitted by the agreed deadline (or agreed extended deadline). In these cases, the College assumes that the student has judged themselves fit to undertake the assessment and so no concurrent or subsequent claim for extenuating circumstances relating to the assessment will be accepted. This also applies to partial submission of coursework – so an EC claim cannot be made for a piece of unfinished work submitted before the deadline.

3. Students' Responsibilities

3.1 Students are responsible for making the decision to take an assessment, or to decide that they are too ill or otherwise affected by ECs which would impede their ability to take an assessment. The EC Policy should only be used by students who experience significant, unforeseen disruptions to their studies in circumstances over which they had no control.

3.2 Students are expected to decide if they are too ill or otherwise affected by ECs to take an assessment. Students may seek advice from staff, but such advice should be limited to the procedures to be followed and the required evidence. It must place the onus clearly on the student to make the final decision.

3.3 Students are responsible for ensuring that they have read and understood this policy and the supporting guidelines documents.

3.4 Students are responsible for reporting ECs within the assessment period/ semester of the assessments affected and by the submission date. Students are responsible for complying with the deadline(s) relevant to the assessment being claimed for.

3.5 Students are responsible for ensuring that all relevant information and supporting documentary evidence is submitted with the EC claim. Students should be aware that an EC claim can only be considered once the fully completed form and relevant supporting evidence has been submitted.

3.6 Normally, late submission of a claim for EC will not be accepted. However, it is recognised that there may be cases where a student is unable to submit a claim for EC within the normal time period (e.g. emergency in-patient hospital treatment). In this case the student can submit a claim within one semester/ assessment period after the initial deadline and will need to provide evidence as to why the claim is late.

¹ *The College may waive these restrictions in the case of a student with a certified illness that would have meant that the student would have been unable to exercise the rational judgement necessary at the appropriate time to deem him or herself unfit to undertake assessments, where this is confirmed by a mental health advisor, or similar practitioner qualified to make this judgement.*



4. Ongoing Medical Condition and Disability

4.1 Students with declared long standing disabilities or on-going medical conditions, i.e. those that have lasted or are likely to last for a period of more than 12 months, are advised to inform the College Disability Officer. Where appropriate, through assessment organised by the Disability Officer, the College will agree learning and assessment strategies to try to ensure that students are provided with reasonable additional support or facilities. Where these arise after initial admission to a programme and they are likely to be of limited duration, students may be advised to suspend enrolment. Otherwise, the College will endeavour to provide reasonable adjustment for support and guidance to enable students to complete their programmes of study. Reasonable adjustment may include support for formal examination and the option of requesting extension to a submission deadline for coursework or, if necessary, deferring assessment in line with the Programme Specification and PGT Regulations.

4.2 Where a student with a long-standing condition, including an unexpected bout of illness as a result of the chronic or long-term condition, needs to submit a programme EC claim on the grounds of their condition registered with the College Disability Officer, they will not be required to provide supporting evidence for the claim. They will need to complete the appropriate form as outlined below, so that their record can be updated accordingly. However, the *timing* of the diagnosis of such conditions may be considered a basis for following the full EC process. For example, in the event of late diagnosis of a condition and a lack of adequate reasonable adjustments made in advance of the exam/assessment, EC can be requested.

4.3 Should a student with a long-standing condition submit an EC claim based on other grounds that are not registered with the College Disability Officer, then such claims would need to follow the full procedure outlined in this policy.

4.4 Failure to disclose a known disability and seek the support of the College Disability Officer will not be accepted as grounds for EC.

5. Grounds for Extenuating Circumstances

5.1 Extenuating Circumstances are circumstances that are exceptional or unforeseen and are over and above the course of everyday experience. They may include:

- i. significant illness, accident or injury;
- ii. the death or serious illness of a close family member or dependent;
- iii. family crisis directly affecting the student;
- iv. disability i.e. where the student's disability comes to light for the first time at assessment (for long standing/ on-going conditions see 4.1 above);
- v. absence caused by maternity, paternity or adoption leave²;
- vi. absence caused by jury service (deferral of which has been denied by the Court);
- vii. exceptional and unforeseen financial hardship, i.e. over and above that experienced by all students;

² See the UTC Maternity, Paternity/Partner Support and Adoption Policy and the Leave of Absence Procedures



- viii. unavoidable absence from domicile – e.g. eviction;
- ix. loss of immigration status;
- x. training camps and competition at National and International level, e.g. elite athletes;
- xi. other serious circumstances which could not be foreseen by the student.

5.2 Circumstances that will **not** normally be considered as Extenuating Circumstances include:

- i. minor illnesses (such as coughs and colds);
- ii. computer problems;
- iii. inadequate planning preventing completion or submission of coursework;
- iv. stress and panic attacks caused by examinations (that are not diagnosed as an illness or already documented by the College Disability Officer);
- v. assessments or examinations scheduled close together;
- vi. personal or domestic events, such as moving house or attending a wedding;
- vii. ongoing position of being a carer for a family member or friend (however unexpected illness or an emergency of the person cared for would be considered under 5.1 above);
- viii. holidays;
- ix. travel arrangements, including scheduled public transport strikes;
- x. consequences of paid employment or voluntary work which are not part of the substantive Programme of study;
- xi. normal and/or scheduled sports activities.

Note: The above examples are for illustration only and not intended to be definitive or exhaustive.

6. Supporting Evidence

6.1 Students are responsible for providing acceptable and sufficient evidence in support of their EC claim. The College will not make enquiries to obtain evidence on their behalf. Evidence must be relevant, legible and in English. Evidence obtained overseas which is written in another language must be accompanied by a certified translation.

6.2 Any costs incurred in supplying evidence are the responsibility of the student.

6.3 Where a student is presenting medical evidence in support of their application, they must present certification by a registered medical practitioner. Such evidence must be directly relevant to the circumstances and the timing of assessments as appropriate even if concerning a long-term medical condition. The College will not accept medical evidence provided by on-line GP services.

6.4 Evidence of personal problems must also be documented, and supported by appropriate independent professional statements.



6.5 The College cannot investigate every claim made under this policy and it trusts the honesty and integrity of its student body. However, it reserves the right to contact any person named in an application for extenuation to seek clarification or further information including checking the authenticity of the evidence submitted. This is not done to remedy omissions in the completion of the documentation by the student, or to seek supporting evidence when not supplied.

7. Confidentiality

7.1 In making an EC request, students may reveal sensitive personal information. The College treats all requests as confidential and access to this information is limited to only those members of staff in the College who are required to be involved in the administration and approval process for ECs.

7.2 Ministry and Deaconess students should be aware that EC requests may be copied to the Professor of Ministry or the Programme Coordinator for the Deaconess Training Programme.

8. Consideration of Claims

8.1 Claims for short-term extension to the scheduled submission deadline will be reviewed and approved or rejected by the Module Convener.

8.2 Programme claims are submitted to the Programme Coordinator who will review and approve or reject the claims.

8.3 The Programme Coordinator will report to the Faculty or PTFI Examination Board regarding programme level claims.

9. Outcomes

9.1 A Module Level EC claim may be approved or rejected and the outcome will be communicated to the student by email no more than 5 working days of receipt by the Module Convener.

9.2 A Programme Level EC claim may be approved or rejected and the outcome will be communicated by the College to the student by email within 10 working days submission to the Programme Coordinator.

9.3 If a claim for EC is granted on the basis of serious ill-health, it is likely that the College will require a medical note advising fitness to return to studies to be authorised, before the student can continue.

Ministry students and Deaconess students will be required to meet with the Professor for Ministry or the Programme Coordinator of the Deaconess Training Programme before resuming studies. Also see the Leave of Absence Procedures.



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Extenuating Circumstances Claim Form

To be completed by the student and submitted to the Module Convener. Where appropriate, this will be forwarded to the Programme Coordinator. All information provided will be respected by the College and treated in confidence.

To be completed by student:

Student name:
Course and year:
Module title:

Reason why the Form is being completed:

Please indicate by ticking the appropriate box or boxes:

- Request for extension of up to 10 working days to submission deadline for coursework
- Request for extension of more than 10 working days to submission deadline for coursework
- Request regarding a class test or written examination

Nature of circumstances: *Explain the circumstances and how they impact on your study.*

Please contact the College if you require clarification on the type and quality of evidence required. Forms which are not fully completed and without the required documentary evidence will not be considered.

Signature of student: Date:

Signature of Personal Tutor: Date:

To confirm that I have seen the above-named student regarding extenuating circumstances.



FOR COMPLETION BY THE MODULE CONVENER (extensions of 10 days or fewer)	
Date Received:	
Considered on:	by:
Decision (with reasons)	
Signed:	
Date decision communicated to student:	
Date decision communicated to Professor of Ministry/DTP Coordinator (if applicable)	
Additional comments:	

FOR COMPLETION BY THE PROGRAMME COORDINATOR (extensions of more than 10 days/exams/class tests)	
Date Received:	
Considered on:	by:
Decision (with reasons)	
Signed:	
Date decision communicated to student:	
Date decision communicated to Professor of Ministry/DTP Coordinator (if applicable)	
Additional comments:	