

## **EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

### **Mitigating impact on your assessment by providing additional time**

#### **Introduction**

- 1 In this document 'we', 'our' and 'us' refer to Sheffield Hallam University. 'You' and 'your' refer to all taught students of Sheffield Hallam University who are studying for a Sheffield Hallam academic award either at the University or a partner organisation.
- 2 It is important when you enrol on your course, and re-enrol each academic year, that you can engage fully with your academic studies and assessment.
- 3 We recognise that you may be balancing your studies with the demands of difficult and complex life circumstances, such as disability, long-term illness, employment demands, personal relationships or caring responsibilities. You are encouraged to make a judgement about whether you can do this despite your life circumstances and the support the University can offer you.
- 4 Students with disabilities or long-term medical conditions can be granted additional time to complete assessment via adjustments in a Learning Contract. If you have a Learning Contract which includes this adjustment, it is not necessary for you to follow the procedures in this document if your reasons for requesting additional time relate to a condition already covered by a Learning Contract. You should refer to the [Assessment Support for Students with Learning Contracts](#).
- 5 If you are registered as a Student Carer or meet the criteria as an elite/talented athlete, it is not necessary for you to follow the procedures in this document if your reasons for requesting additional time relate to your caring responsibilities/sporting commitments. You should refer to the [Assessment Support for Student Carers/Assessment Support for Elite and Talented Athletes](#).
- 6 As set out in the [Student Attendance and Engagement Policy](#), you are required to attend classes, engage with studies and attempt assessments. A high level of attendance contributes significantly to academic achievement, retention, progression, and the successful completion of your course. It also contributes to the enhancement of the quality of the learning experience and the development of core skills such as teamwork and professional communication and behaviour. In terms of assessment, this includes submitting all assessments by scheduled submission dates and attending all scheduled assessments, for example in class tests, presentations and exams.
- 7 This policy and procedure explains what you need to do if you have extenuating circumstances which impact on your ability to engage with assessment. You should refer to the [Break in Study Policy and Procedure](#) if your circumstances are impacting on your ability to engage in teaching and learning as well as your assessments.

## Policy

- 8 Extenuating circumstances are life circumstances that are impacting on your performance in assessment in a way you could not reasonably have anticipated at the beginning of an academic year because:
- I. Something has occurred, or been diagnosed, suddenly and unexpectedly during the academic year, or
  - II. Pre-existing difficult and complex life circumstances have intensified during the academic year.

See Annex A for indicative examples of when life circumstances fall into the definition of extenuating circumstances.

- 9 You must let us know as soon as possible if you think your studies are being affected by extenuating circumstances. You can do this by contacting your Student Support Adviser. The sooner you let us know, the more ways there will be to support you including the options in this document. These options will become limited, or may not be available at all if you wait until after an assessment period or until the end of an academic year before disclosing extenuating circumstances. See Annex B.
- 10 We understand it is not always easy to disclose personal, private, and sensitive matters. If you have concerns about doing this then please discuss them with a Student Support Adviser. Anything you tell us will be treated in the strictest confidence. Information will be securely stored and only seen by those members of staff responsible for processing and considering your request.
- 11 This policy and procedure contains two options to help you manage the impact of extenuating circumstances on your performance in assessment by providing additional time to complete that assessment. These options do not remove the requirement to take assessment, or change the nature of that assessment, but facilitate you completing it when you are in a better position to do so. The options are
- An extension to a submission deadline (see sections 14-20)
  - A repeat of an assessment attempt (see sections 21-36)

The appropriateness and availability of each option will very much depend on the timing and severity of your circumstances and when you disclose them.

- 12 The options are intended to provide short-term 'emergency' support within an academic year so that you can then evaluate your ability to continue to study in the next academic year considering your new or intensified life circumstances. The options are not designed to support you through the duration of your course, and it is unlikely that a particular set of life circumstances will fall within the definition of extenuating circumstances for more than one academic year. (see Annex 1 for examples).
- 13 The options will give you more time to complete assessment but cannot replace missed teaching or other learning activities. If your circumstances are such that you are likely to miss a substantial amount of teaching/learning activities then you need to discuss this with your Student Support Adviser as soon as possible. The only situations whereby you might be able to repeat teaching you have missed are:

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*Via the Break in Study Process* A break in study means that you are temporarily halting your studies with the intention of resuming your studies in the next academic year (usually within a 6-18-month period). If your circumstances are likely to extend beyond this time, then you are advised to withdraw from your course and re-apply via the normal Admissions process at a time when you can engage in your studies

*Via the [Supporting your Capacity to Study Process](#)* The process for Supporting Your Capacity to Study may be applied at the University's discretion where it is felt you may not have the capacity to succeed in your studies at the present time.

- 14 We will consider any request made within the Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure sensitively and fairly based on the extent to which you have:
- Submitted the request in a timely manner.
  - Clearly stated the nature of your circumstances and the impact they are having on your ability to study and take assessment.
  - Provided appropriate documentary evidence where requested and where it can be reasonably obtained.

### Procedure - Extending a Submission Deadline

- 15 This option generally applies to assignments which must be **submitted** by a specified deadline (e.g. an essay). It may not be possible to facilitate this option for certain assessments that must be delivered on a specified day (e.g. phase tests, presentations, OSCEs, etc) where this cannot be accommodated by the Module Leader. This option is not possible for examinations. Where this option is not possible, you can consider using the request to repeat an assessment attempt process (see sections 21-36).
- 16 It is your responsibility to be aware of your assessment schedule and to manage your time to ensure that coursework is submitted by the published deadline. Missing a deadline will generally mean the work is not marked (although work submitted no later than one working day after the deadline will be marked, capped at the minimum module pass mark).
- 17 Extending a submission deadline may help you mitigate the impact of extenuating circumstances, however you need to be aware that this may mean you having to submit the work close to the deadline for another assessment, which may impact on your performance.
- 18 If you feel it is in your best interests to request an extension to a submission deadline then you should complete the online Request to Extend a Submission Deadline (RESD) via [My Hallam](#). The RESD should normally be submitted no later than 24 hours before the submission deadline for the assessment. Requests made after this time may not be considered. If you are struggling to complete the request for any reason, then please speak to your Student Support Adviser.
- 19 Extensions are intended to allow you to complete coursework, not to start it. Therefore, you are required to demonstrate that you have made such progress that it is reasonable to assume that you would have completed on time had it not been for the circumstances reported. Failure to provide work in progress will mean that your extension request is declined.
- 20 The nature of these circumstances means it might not be possible to obtain medical evidence to corroborate the circumstances you are reporting. You are, therefore, not required to automatically provide such evidence with your request. However, the University does have the right to subsequently request evidence from you and this should be provided on request.

- 21 If your request is accepted you will be given an extended submission deadline of 5 working days. It will be your responsibility to meet the new deadline. It is not possible to request a further extension. If you feel your extenuating circumstances are preventing you from meeting the new deadline, you should speak to your Student Support Adviser for advice about available options.

*Note: we define working days as all days other than weekends, public holidays and University closure periods.*

## **Procedure - Repeating an Assessment Attempt**

### **This procedure can be used**

- 22 This option is available for any assessment task affected by extenuating circumstances.
- 23 Registration on a module entitles you to an initial attempt at each assessment task in that module, and one referral attempt if required. Repeating an assessment attempt means the attempt affected by extenuating circumstances is restored. Therefore:
- If the initial attempt is affected by extenuating circumstances, then you will repeat this attempt at a later date (during the reassessment period), as if for the first time.
  - If the referral attempt is affected by extenuating circumstances, you will take this attempt at a later date (normally during the next academic year), with the mark still capped at the minimum module pass mark.
- 24 Repeating an assessment attempt may help you mitigate the impact of extenuating circumstances, however there are implications you will need to consider:
- Generally, the best time to attempt assessment is at the point it is initially set, within the delivery of the module, alongside the rest of your student cohort, and where the assessment forms part of a structured assessment schedule.
  - The repeat will normally take place in the published reassessment period for your course. This could mean you having to return to the University over the summer to complete work or sit an examination.
  - The repeat may involve you having to complete a different assignment to the one set for the initial or referral attempt and will always involve a different examination.
  - If you repeat attempts in several assessment tasks, then it could lead to you having to manage a large workload within a short period of time.
  - Failure to successfully complete all assessment tasks by the end of an academic year could prevent you progressing to the next level of study in the following year. This would extend the time taken to complete your course.
- 25 If you feel it is your best interests to request to repeat the assessment attempt, you should complete the online Request to Repeat an Assessment Attempt (RRAA) via [My Student Record](#). It is important that we hear from you directly about how your circumstances have affected you. Therefore, we do not allow RRAAs to be submitted by third parties (for example a parent or a friend). If you are struggling to complete the online request for any reason, then please speak to your Student Support Adviser.
- 26 **The RRAA should be submitted within 5 working days from the date of the assessment task affected by extenuating circumstances.** This means:
- 5 working days from the submission deadline for a coursework task.
  - 5 working days from the date of an examination or other fixed assessment event.

Please note that when submitting the RRAA, you will have an additional 10 working days to provide evidence to support your request before it is considered by an Extenuating Circumstances Panel.

- 27 A RRAA received after the 5 working days deadline will not normally be considered unless you can demonstrate you were incapable of meeting the deadline due to exceptional reasons, e.g. admission to hospital, severe and sustained illness. You will need to explain your reasons for late submission on the RRAA and give evidence of your reasons where appropriate.
- 28 **RRAAs submitted after publication of your results will not be considered in any circumstances.** You may be able to submit an [Appeal against the Assessment Board](#) decision if you can evidence that you were incapable of telling us about your circumstances at the time of your assessment.
- 29 The RRAA must include:
- A clear and concise explanation of your circumstances and the impact they have had on your performance in the assessment.
  - Details of whether you have previously reported your circumstances to a member of staff.
  - Relevant independent documentary evidence to support your claim where it can be provided. Please see the [evidence to support a RRAA](#) guidance.

Note: in certain situations you can use the [self-certification procedure](#) to evidence absence from an examination or other time-constrained assessment activity.

- 30 Your RRAA will be considered by an Extenuating Circumstances Panel (ECP), which comprises up to three senior members of staff from Student and Academic Services (with a quoracy of two) The ECP will consider your RRAA on the basis of the information you provide on the RRAA form, the evidence you provide to support those circumstances, and any statements you request from your Student Support Adviser. The ECP will send you its decision via an e-mail to your student e-mail account.
- 31 If the ECP accepts your RRAA and you have not passed the module concerned, you will be allowed to repeat the particular assessment task or tasks.
- 32 ***If the ECP accepts your RRAA and you have passed the module concerned, you will not normally be allowed to repeat any task on that module.*** However, if you are a Level 6 or 7 student, you can ask to repeat a task affected by approved extenuating circumstances if you meet the following criteria:-
- the module affected is a Level 6 or 7 module
  - your final award has been published
  - repeating the task could make a difference to your final award
  - you submitted your RRAA prior to publication of your final award
  - you have submitted your request to take the affected tasks again within 5 working days of your final award being published.

If you do repeat a task on a module you have already passed and the mark you achieve is lower than your initial attempt, then the initial (higher) mark will be used to calculate the overall module mark.

- 33 You will find out if you can repeat an attempt at an assessment task when you receive your results on My Student Record. Please check the Virtual Helpdesk on My Hallam for details of when results will be issued and the requirements for resubmission.
- 34 If the ECP declines your RRAA, it will be for one or more of the following reasons:
- It has been submitted late without valid reason.
  - There is insufficient evidence to support the circumstances reported.
  - There is no link between the timing of the circumstances reported and the timing of the assessment.
  - The circumstances could have been avoided or the impact limited.
  - Reasonable action has already been taken to mitigate the impact of the circumstances.
- 35 You will receive an e-mail from the ECP with an explanation for the decision to decline. You should read the [Appeals Policy and Procedure](#) for information about the grounds on which you may appeal this decision. You are advised to do this as soon as possible as the deadline for submitting an appeal is 10 working days from the date on which we send you the decision.
- 36 If you have a RRAA accepted in the final year of the maximum duration of your course, you will be able to move into an additional year to complete any continuing reassessment. You will not however be able to start any new study. See [Standard Assessment Regulation 1: Duration of course](#).
- 37 This procedure is designed to support you to attend and engage during an academic year. It is important when you re-enrol each academic year, that you can engage fully with your academic studies and assessment. If the circumstances you report continue to persist, we expect you to take reasonable steps to access support to help you to mitigate the impact. We will not necessarily accept further RRAAs submitted for the same circumstances.
- 38 Where the support mechanisms described in the points above (Extending a Submission Deadline, Repeating an Assessment Attempt, Break in Study and Supporting Your Capacity to Study) have been exhausted and you are still unable to engage with your academic studies and assessment, the University may deem it to be in your best interests to be withdrawn from your course to allow you to focus on resolving the circumstances impacting you.

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## Annex A

The following scenarios provide indicative examples of where life circumstances fall within the definition of extenuating circumstances

### Scenario 1: Sudden and unexpected

You are in Year 1 of your course and have been engaging with your studies throughout the year without any issues. Shortly before you are due to submit your semester 2 assignments, you suffer a sudden and unexpected event – for example a medical emergency, family crisis or bereavement of someone close to you. Understandably this affects your ability to prepare for and attempt assessment in the assessment period.

In your current Year 1	You would be able to request a short-term extension or longer-term deferral to the next assessment period. If your circumstances have not improved by the next assessment period, you might be able to request a further deferral.
In between year 1 and year 2	Hopefully, the support measures will help protect your performance and enable you to successfully complete the academic year. This will give you the time and space to reflect on the circumstances and how they might affect your ability to study going forward. If necessary, you might want to consider taking a break in studies or discussing a change to part-time mode of study (where available)
If you enrol onto Year 2	We will not be able to provide additional support through the EC Policy because the circumstances are no longer sudden and severe. We may be able to provide different forms of support however, for example via a learning contract if your medical issues become long-term or through counselling services.

### Scenario 2: Emerging medical conditions

You enter your course with no known medical issues and are initially able to attend and engage with studies in Year 1 without any problems. However, as the year progresses you begin to suffer health problems which affect your ability to focus on assessment. You are receiving treatment for this but do not receive a diagnosis of a condition until the end of the year.

In your current Year 1	You would be able to request a short-term extension or longer-term deferral to the next assessment period. If your circumstances are still affecting your ability to submit assessment during the next assessment period, you might be able to request a further deferral.
In between Year 1 and year 2	Hopefully, the support measures will help protect your performance and enable you to successfully complete the academic year. This will give you time and space to reflect on how you want to proceed given your diagnosis and to obtain appropriate support. We will be able to put a learning contract in place that sets out the adjustments we can make to teaching and assessment, including where appropriate, extended submission deadlines. You might also want to consider taking a break in study or discussing a change to part-time mode of study (where available) if you feel this is appropriate.
If you enrol onto Year 2	It will not be necessary for to use the Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure for future years as the support will be set out in your learning contract.

### Scenario 3: Escalating caring responsibilities

You enter the course knowing that you will be balancing your studies alongside your caring responsibilities for an elderly relative. You know this will be a challenge but are confident you can devote sufficient time to both. Everything goes well in Year 1 and you successfully complete all



assessment. Unfortunately, during Year 2 your caring responsibilities escalate as the health of an elderly relative deteriorates. This means that whilst you can still attend classes, you are required to spend much more time caring in the evenings which leave you less time to work on assignments.

Year 1	No impact
In your current Year 2	You would be able to request a short-term extension or longer-term deferral to the next assessment period to help you overcome the impact that the additional caring requirements are having on your ability to prepare for and submit assessment. If the situation persists to the reassessment period, then you would be able to request an extension/deferral at that point too.
In between Year 2 and year 3	Hopefully, the support measures will help protect your performance and enable you to successfully complete the academic year. This will give you time and space to reflect on how you want to proceed given the change in your circumstances. You might want to consider taking a break in study or discussing a change to part-time mode of study (where available) if appropriate.
If you enrol onto Year 3	It is unlikely that your life circumstances would fall within the definition of extenuating circumstances in future years of study. It is important therefore that you speak to your Student Support Adviser about any other forms of support that might be available

#### **Scenario 4: Changing work commitments (part-time students only)**

You are a part-time student who is also in full-time employment. You enter the course confident that you can manage the demands of both. During Year 1 however, you face increased pressures from your employer which require you to work overtime in the evenings and at weekends. Whilst you are still able to attend classes, you have less time in the evenings and at weekends to devote to completing assessment.

In your current Year 1	You would be able to request a short-term extension or longer-term deferral to the next assessment period to help you overcome the impact that the additional employment requirements are having on your ability to prepare for and submit assessment. If the situation persists to the reassessment period, then you would be able to request an extension/deferral at that point too.
In between Year 1 and Year 2	Hopefully, the support measures will help protect your performance and enable you to successfully complete the academic year. This will give you time and space to reflect on how you want to proceed given the change in your circumstances. You might want to consider taking a break in study if appropriate.
If you enrol onto Year 3	It is unlikely that your life circumstances would fall within the definition of extenuating circumstances in future years of study. It is important therefore that you speak to your Student Support Adviser about any other forms of support that might be available

**Please note - extensions and deferral attempts provided by the Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure are designed to help you mitigate the impact your extenuating circumstances are having on assessment. They do not replace missed teaching. If your circumstances are such that you are likely to miss a substantial amount of teaching then you will need to discuss a break in study with your Student Support Adviser.**



## Examples of where life circumstances do not fall within the definition of extenuating circumstances

There are some life circumstances that will not normally meet our definition of extenuating circumstances because we believe they can be avoided or that you can be reasonably expected to manage the impact. These include:

- Ongoing situations occurring in previous years
- The break-up of a short-term relationship
- Financial difficulties
- Attending or taking part in sporting and cultural events (unless these are national or international events)
- Holidays or travel
- Normal domestic issues, such as moving house
- Voluntary work
- Weddings
- Work commitments for full-time students

In addition, we do not accept study related issues as extenuating circumstances, for example:

- Not giving yourself sufficient time to complete coursework and missing the submission deadline
- Losing coursework
- Failure to read your examination timetable
- Refusal to return for assessments scheduled for the reassessment period
- Withdrawal of IT facilities as a result of being in debt to the University
- Circumstances that affect another individual in relation to group work
- English being your second language
- Transport difficulties that could easily have been avoided
- IT difficulties (other than those occurring suddenly and unexpectedly during an online exam).

## Annex B

You have four opportunities to tell us about your circumstances in order to request another assessment attempt. You are strongly encouraged to tell us at the first opportunity. As you will see below, the later you tell us, the more information you need to provide and the less likely you will meet all the criteria listed to have your claim approved.

<p><b>OPPORTUNITY ONE</b></p> <p>Submit a RRAA within 5 working days of the assessment affected.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe your circumstances, providing dates of when the circumstances occurred.</li> <li>• Provide evidence supporting your claim.</li> </ul>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITY TWO</b></p> <p>Submit a RRAA beyond 5 working days of the assessment affected but before the final results of the module are published on My Student Record.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State the reason you are submitting the RRAA late.</li> <li>• Provide evidence to support your reason for submitting the RRAA late.</li> <li>• Describe circumstances, providing dates of when the circumstances occurred.</li> <li>• Provide evidence supporting your claim.</li> </ul>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITY THREE</b></p> <p>When the final results of the module are published on My Student Record following an Assessment Board (<i>i.e. not your provisional results on Grade Centre</i>), you can no longer submit a RRAA.</p> <p>Submit an <a href="#">appeal</a> within 10 working days of your results being published on My Student Record.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State the reason you were <b>incapable of submitting a RRAA</b> within the usual timeframes.</li> <li>• Provide evidence to support your reason for lateness.</li> <li>• Describe circumstances, providing dates of when the circumstances occurred.</li> <li>• Provide evidence supporting your claim.</li> </ul>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITY FOUR</b></p> <p>Submit an appeal beyond the 10 working days of your results being published on My Student Record</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State the reason you are submitting the appeal late.</li> <li>• Provide evidence to support your reason for lateness.</li> <li>• State the reason you were <b>incapable of submitting a RRAA</b> within the usual timeframes.</li> <li>• Provide evidence to support your reason.</li> <li>• Describe circumstances, providing dates of when the circumstances occurred.</li> <li>• Provide evidence supporting your claim.</li> </ul>