

LTC12D117

**Title:** *Proposed Changes to Regulations Regarding Extenuating Circumstances*  
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### **Issue**

The University Academic Appeals & Complaints Review Group were tasked by LTC with reviewing extant arrangements for the management of extenuating circumstances. This document outlines a number of options for LTC to consider in terms of possible future approaches to a regulatory framework for extenuating circumstances.

### **Recommendation**

Recipients are asked to consider the options outlined in the paper in order that LTC can determine its preferred approach. Subsequent to LTC selecting a favoured regulatory approach LTS will draw up revised regulations, processes and associated guidance to be brought to LTC before the end of the current academic year.

### **Resource Implications**

None

### **Risk Implications**

N/A

### **Equality and Diversity**

The proposed options from which LTC will select a preferred route will apply equally to all students.

### **Timing of decisions**

A clear decision from LTC will allow detailed regulations to be approved before the end of the current academic year.

### **Further Information**

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# Proposed Extenuating Circumstances Regulations Discussion Document

## 1. Background:

- The University conducted a review of the academic appeals and complaints regulations in the academic year 2011-12.
- This led to approval through LTC of a new set of regulations which came into force in the current academic year.
- As part of the review process the management of extenuating circumstances was explored. It became clear that the issues surrounding extenuating circumstances should be examined in more detail through a sub-group of the Appeals Review Group.
- It was subsequently agreed by LTC that this sub-group should bring forward proposals by the end of 2012-13.
- This document proposes a definition of Extenuating Circumstances, a number of guiding principles for their management and application, and some options for LTC to consider.
- Once LTC has determined which option it wishes to adopt a set of regulations along with supporting process maps and guidance notes will be produced

## 2. Definition of Extenuating Circumstances:

An Extenuating circumstance is:

- (i) An acute factor or an acute expression of a chronic condition that can be evidenced, is outside the student's control and which affects performance in and/ or engagement with assessment.
- (ii) Certain other circumstances that are explicitly referenced within the Extenuating Circumstances Policy.

Extenuating circumstances would normally affect the student within three weeks of course test/exam/CW submission date.

## 3. Principles:

The Review Group proposes that the following principles should apply to the management of extenuating circumstances:

- We need to strive for consistency in relation to the range of circumstances that would normally be considered as valid ECs. This shall be achieved by adopting the extant list of extenuating circumstances provided by the Academic Registrars' Council.
- Any system should be uncomplicated in its application. The approved process should minimize bureaucracy and the time taken for cases to be considered.

- The regulations should be reasonable, sensible and student focused, while recognising the need to ensure that the validity of claimed ECs can be appropriately tested
- Where evidence is required in support of a claimed EC, it should normally be received within 10 days of application.
- There shall be an EC Panel associated with each Board of Examiners and the Chair of each EC Panel shall be a member of the Board of Examiners. Each Panel shall consist of a pool of 4 academic members appointed by the Head of School, only 3 of whom need to meet. Chairs of Exam Boards should be excluded from Chairing the Panel.

#### **4. Circumstances Where ECs May be Considered:**

- Extension requests for those items of assessment classified as 'Deadline' (CW/WA/DI/PR/PS)
- Requests for Delayed Assessment for those items of assessment classified as 'Event' (EX/CT/OSCE/OSPE/PT)
- For consideration by Pre-Exam Board EC Panels in relation to ECs which may impact on a decision about final classification or progression

#### **5. Options for Consideration by LTC:**

##### **5.1 Extension Requests**

Irrespective of which Option is selected it is proposed that:

- Where an extension is approved for over 20 days, a new assignment will be set for the student in receipt of the extension. This will allow feedback to be delivered to the rest of the cohort.
- The EC Panel can meet virtually when needed (a minimum of 2 members to agree any decision)
- A two working days turnaround shall apply to the EC Panel's consideration of any extension requests

Option A:

- Extensions are obtained on the basis of Self-certification for up to once a semester. This would cover extensions up to 7 days where the ECs are declared as being from an ARC-based list of permissible ECs.
- "Once a semester" may include a single request relating to a single period of seven days of extension but applying to more than one item of assessment where a student has multiple co-incident submission deadlines.

- Where students request more than one extension within one semester, any additional applications must be supported by acceptable evidence.
- Where additional requests are of a type that meets the ARC criteria they may be approved by LTC Co-ordinators.
- Additional requests that cannot be mapped to the ARC criteria or do not have clear evidence shall be considered by at least 2 members of the relevant EC Panel

Option B:

- LTS Co-ordinators to consider and approve applications where acceptable evidence in support of an EC that meets the ARC-based criteria has been provided.
- Extension requests that do not meet this criteria shall be considered by at least 2 members of the relevant EC Panel

When considered at TPPG (May 2013) Option A was preferred by the group

## **5.2 Delayed Assessments/Reassessments (DA/R)**

Definition of terms:

- Students may be permitted to repeat an 'Event' assessment, because of circumstances beyond their control that affect performance or attendance at the Event.
- Students might be offered a Delayed Assessment (where circumstances affect the initial assessment), Delayed Reassessment (where circumstances affect the reassessment attempt) or Further Reassessment (where circumstances affected the assessment or reassessment but are not deemed enough for a Delayed Reassessment).
- A Delayed assessment cancels the assessment that it replaces, whereas the granting of Further Reassessment provides an additional opportunity without cancelling the original assessment attempt.

In all cases of DA/R the following shall apply:

- DA/R are to be considered where the student failed to attend, where the student attempted the assessment (and either passed or failed) and where the delivery of the programme has hampered ability of students to be assessed fairly and the student believes that their ability to be assessed fairly was affected.
- The list of acceptable ECs and evidence required should be based on the ARC principles.

- Students would be expected to seek medical evidence on the day, unless their medical condition prevented it.
- Students to be advised to submit an application within 48 hours of the assessment (even in cases where they did not attend), with a later deadline for the provision of supporting evidence where such evidence was difficult to obtain quickly.
- Bad weather conditions are only acceptable for DA/R where advice to the public has been to avoid unnecessary journeys and where public transport is not running.
- If a student's application for DA/R is successful, they can choose whether or not to take the new assessment and replace their existing mark. If they reject the new opportunity, however, the ECs would not be able to be used in consideration of classification decisions.

#### Option A

- DA/R should be considered by LTS coordinators in the first instance, utilising Academic Panels in difficult cases or to confirm rejection.
- Only instances where the student failed to attend, or attended but informed the Invigilator they had become ill and then sought medical evidence would be considered under DA/R.
- Students affected by ECs but who complete the Event assessment would not be able to request DA/R. Instead they would submit their ECs for consideration by the EC Panel in relation to classification and/or progression decisions.

#### Option B

- As Option A, except students may seek DA/R even when the assessment event has been attended in its entirety and such cases will be considered by the Academic Panel.

#### Option C

- DA/R should be considered alongside a "Fit to Sit" policy. If a student chose to attend and attempt the assessment, they could not later apply for DA/R. Only those who did not attend could apply, submitting ECs relating to the assessment.
- This is not the favoured option of the Sub Group, although it provided clarity. It pushes post hoc decisions to the Appeals route, there would be problems over student who did not attend proving they were not fit to sit and it might lead to the tactical sitting of exams.

When considered at TPPG (May 2013) Option A was preferred by the group

### 5.3 School-Based EC Pre-Board Panels

- Panels should be school-based and comprise of a pool of 4 academic members appointed by the Head of School, only 3 of whom need to meet. Chairs of Exam Boards should be excluded from Chairing the Panel.
- The purpose of a Pre-Board Panel is to consider ECs (presented to the Board via the Hub by students) that may impact on decisions about progression or classification.
- ECs considered by the Panel include those already considered for successful extensions or Good Cause.
- ECs reported to an Academic will also need to be reported to the Hub by students to ensure that it is recorded and treated appropriately. The only exception to this would be where the student's ability to report is affected by the EC.
- ECs for the EC Panel must be submitted no later than 10 days prior to the meeting of the EC Panel. These dates shall be publicised to students
- ECs for the Panel should be collated as now by LTS.
- Chairs of EC Panels should also be members of the Exam Board.
- In order to ensure full consideration by EC Panels, it may not be possible to guarantee anonymity for students, but this should be restored when considered at Board.
- The Panel should be serviced by a member of LTS staff, able to provide guidance on processes.

#### Option A

- The EC Panel makes a decision on the severity of impact and a recommendation on how the ECs should be treated by the Exam Board.
- Actual compensation is formally determined by the Exam Board.

#### Option B

- The EC Panel makes a decision on the severity of impact only.
- The Exam Board determines how best this level of severity be reflected in decisions about progression and classification

#### Option C

- The EC Panel makes a decision on the severity of impact
- There shall be a graduated classification of severity
- The appropriate compensation for a given level of severity shall be approved by LTC and applied by the Exam Board

- This method may become overly complex when student present with more than one EC with varying levels of severity applying to a range of modules.

When considered at TPPG (May 2013) Option A was preferred by the group