

## UCD School of Earth Sciences

### Guidance note to students on extenuating circumstances

Extenuating circumstances are *unforeseen* circumstances beyond your control which prevented you from meeting the requirements of the programme, which might include:

- Missing an examination or test
- Failing to submit all or any part of any continuous assessments by the due date
- Performing below ability in work submitted or examinations attended.

There is a formal UCD process for extenuating circumstances claims. However, for short absences you may prefer to use the School of Earth Sciences form. It can be used for any module in which the module co-ordinator provides the form (usually through Blackboard). ***In both systems, you must submit your claim within 10 working days (5 days for end of semester exams) of the end of the affected period.***

**The School of Earth Sciences extenuating circumstances form** should be used ONLY when all the conditions below apply:

- You were absent / study was affected for no more than a week.
- You missed assessment(s) in no more than two modules, all of them run by the School of Earth Sciences.
- You have not had a previous extenuating circumstances claim in the same semester.
- No end of semester exams were missed or affected.

In all other cases, use the formal UCD extenuating circumstances process (see below).

You must call to the module co-ordinator to complete the form and provide documentary evidence for extenuating circumstances, for example a doctor's note, a letter from a hospital, or a link to a death notice in the case of a funeral. A separate copy of the School form must be completed for each module, with a separate copy of the documentary evidence. Acceptable and unacceptable grounds for extenuating circumstances are the same as those set out in the formal UCD system in the following pages and at:

<https://www.ucd.ie/students/studentdesk/extenuatingcircumstances/>

*Please hand or email completed forms with documentary evidence to Ms Julia Gustafsson, room G15, Science West as soon as possible ([julia.gustafsson@ucd.ie](mailto:julia.gustafsson@ucd.ie))*

**UCD's formal extenuating circumstances process** involves you completing an extenuating circumstances form through your programme office and submitting supporting documentation, e.g. doctor's letter. You can use this process for ANY valid extenuating circumstances, but decisions can take up to a month. Science students must use it online at: <http://www.ucd.ie/science/study/currentundergraduatesciencestudents/extenuatingcircumstances/>

**Foreseen** absences are **not** considered to be extenuating circumstances in UCD. If you know that you will not be able to attend an assessment or a significant number of classes, you should always speak **in advance of absence** to the module co-ordinator, or another lecturer teaching the module. If you have a serious reason for not attending, such as a medical appointment that you cannot change, staff will try to accommodate you. There is no form to fill in. If the absence relates to you playing for a UCD or national sports team, you must provide **in advance** an explanatory letter from the sports club.

**Policy on Extenuating  
Circumstances  
Student Guide**

Approved by Academic Council on 10 December 2009

Last updated: 28 March 2023

## 1. What are Extenuating Circumstances?

Extenuating circumstances are serious ***unforeseen circumstances*** beyond your control which prevented you from meeting the requirements of your programme which might include:

- Missing an examination or test
- Failing to submit all or any part of any continuous assessments by the due date
- Performing below your ability in work submitted or examinations attended
- Circumstances that persisted throughout the trimester or a substantial part of it that affected your performance

Extenuating circumstances may include:

- Involvement in an accident
- Victim of crime
- An acute illness or serious on-going medical condition
- Ongoing life-threatening illness of a close family member or partner
- Bereavement of a close family member or partner
- Acute or on-going serious personal/emotional circumstances
- Domestic upheaval at the time of the assessment (e.g. fire, burglary, eviction)

The following are examples of what may not normally be considered grounds for extenuating circumstances and any applications citing any of the following are unlikely to be considered by the Governing Board:

- Typical symptoms associated with exam stress (e.g. anxiety, sleeping disturbances etc)
- Minor illnesses such as a common cold
- Relationship difficulties
- Financial difficulties
- Holidays during the academic year
- Accommodation issues
- Commuting issues
- Misreading the examination timetable
- Paid employment or voluntary work \*
- IT and/or computer failure
- English is not your first language
- Multiple assessments in a short time
- Failure to plan study schedule
- Sporting commitments \*\*
- Debs/weddings/social events
- Election/campaigning commitments
- Registration for multiple programmes

Please note: the above examples are not definitive, and are intended only as a guide. In all cases, the Governing Board has ultimate authority to use its discretion, taking into account the full circumstances of a particular case.

\* **Work commitments** are not normally considered to be extenuating circumstances. However a student on a part-time and/or continuing professional education programme may have work-related extenuating circumstances outside of the norm (e.g. a work-related court case that they legally must attend) and in these exceptional cases, they should consult the appropriate programme/school office for advice.

\*\* **Sporting Commitments** are not normally considered grounds for extenuating circumstances. Where applicable, the student should refer to the [Policy on Late Submission of Coursework](#).

## 2. How do I make an Application?

Before you make an application, it is important that you seek guidance and support. Those who provide student support include College Office and School office staff, student advisers, chaplains, academic staff, representatives of the Students' Union or relevant staff members. Having sought advice from a representative of the Students' Union or relevant staff member, you should proceed with making an application.

For guidance on applications that are retrospective, please contact your School or College Office or Student Adviser. Retrospective applications cannot be made online.

To complete an online Extenuating Circumstances Application you should follow the following five steps:

- (1) Familiarise yourself with what is considered an extenuating Circumstance (see above).
- (2) Go to the Programme Services tab in SISWeb and click on "[Applications for Extenuating Circumstances](#)"
- (3) Click on the "New Application" button and complete the information requested on this form. Please clearly and succinctly detail your circumstances.
- (4) In "Step 2" of the form you must list any modules and/or components which you have missed or were impacted by your extenuating circumstances. You will need to repeat this step for every module and/or component which you have missed or which was impacted.
- (5) Click "Submit your Application" when you are complete.

Your application when accepted will be forwarded to the module co-ordinator of each module you have missed or which was impacted for appropriate action.

For further support or guidance, please contact your School or College Office or Student Adviser.

### ***Evidence supporting your application***

When submitting an application, you must provide verifiable written confirmation that supports your application for extenuating circumstances, the purpose of which is to help the University to understand and verify the nature of the circumstances which have affected you. This evidence must express an opinion as to the extent to which your performance or ability to perform has been affected. If any of the circumstances are sensitive, you should discuss with the person providing the evidence the need to express the impact of the circumstances along with necessary information regarding the incident/situation.

#### **Please note:**

- Evidence must relate to the specific application for extenuating circumstances being made.
- You may not use a family member to provide evidence.
- The documentation provided must be consistent with the application in terms of matters such as dates, circumstances etc. The Governing Board reserves the right to reject any application in cases where there are serious discrepancies between the documentation and the application.
- The Governing Board reserves the right to verify and seek further details on this documentation.

Only evidence from one of the following qualified professionals will be accepted:

- Registered medical practitioner/health professional
- Member of An Garda Síochána
- Registered counsellor/psychotherapist
- Psychologist
- UCD student support professional (i.e. UCD Student Adviser; member of the UCD Access/New ERA or Disability Support Service staff; official UCD student counsellor or UCD Chaplain).

Any evidence must be on headed paper and must be legible, stamped and dated. The University takes very seriously the issue of fraudulent applications. Should a Governing Board discover that an application is supported by forged or incorrect evidence, the matter may be referred to the University's disciplinary process.

### 3. What are the next steps?

#### ***When must I submit my application?***

All applications for extenuating circumstances must be submitted as close as possible to the time the circumstances occurred and must be submitted within the following timeframes:

1. For in-trimester assessments, within 10 working days of the date of the assessment deadline
2. For end-of-trimester examinations, within 5 working days of the end of the University examination period.

You should note that in the case of end-of-trimester 1 examinations, the University re-opens in early January – you are advised to check dates for submission of applications with your College Office.

In very exceptional circumstances, it may not be possible to meet this deadline. In these circumstances you should contact your College Office/School as soon as is practicable for advice.

#### ***What happens after I submit my application?***

**Undergraduate Students:** Your College Office will alert any relevant UCD staff member about your application whilst preserving confidentiality. Your form will be reviewed by the appropriate Programme Examination Board or delegated committee, which will reach a decision as to whether or not your particular circumstances will be taken into account when considering your academic performance.

**Graduate Students:** the issue will be considered by the relevant School. If the application cannot be solved at a local level, the matter will be referred to your Governing Board, whilst preserving confidentiality.

#### ***Who makes the decision?***

The Governing Board makes the decision about your extenuating circumstances.

#### ***What are the possible outcomes?***

If your application for extenuating circumstances is accepted, one of the following outcomes will apply:

##### **Outcome 1**

If you asked that your special circumstances be taken into account by the Governing Board in determining your final grade for the module(s), the School(s) involved will have taken this into account when submitting a final grade for your module. You will not be given details of the decisions made and the grade changes made (if any).

##### **Outcome 2**

If you are granted the opportunity to have specific components of a module assessed on a further occasion without academic penalty, you will be awarded an IX grade for that module. You must contact the School for details on how to complete the assessment for the module. Your result will not be capped. You must complete the component (or components) of assessment, or complete some equivalent assessment(s), set by the School within a period prescribed by the School, but no later than two trimesters of the initial module attempt.

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**4. Useful links**

- [Extenuating Circumstances Policy:](#)
  - [Online application form](#)
  - [UCD Policy on Late Submission of Coursework](#)
  - [UCD Policy on Leave of Absence](#)
  - [Information on how to withdraw from a module](#)
  - [Understanding Grades](#) - incl other grades such as IX
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