

Diploma Extenuating Circumstances – Assessment Policy

INTRODUCTION

1. Throughout their studies, students are required to complete and submit, or sit, a wide range of assessments. This will require students to balance their workload and use time-management skills to ensure that assessments are submitted to stated deadlines. However, New College of the Humanities (the College) recognises that there may be serious adverse circumstances outside of a student's control that prevent them from completing assessments and that it is in their best interests that any extenuating factors should be considered when determining student results in the case of summative assessments.

AIM OF THIS POLICY

2. The aim of the College's Extenuating Circumstances – Diploma Assessment Policy is to:
 - 2.1. make clear the types of serious adverse factors that the College will consider as extenuating circumstances and the process to be followed for submission;
 - 2.2. ensure fair and equal treatment of all students when considering extenuating circumstances.

SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

3. This policy applies solely to completion of, submission of, preparation for or attendance at assessments for the College's Diploma.
4. This policy does not apply to any effects resulting from a disability within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010. Any effects on the submission of, or attendance at diploma assessments resulting from such a disability must be discussed with the College separately and agreements on any reasonable adjustments made outside of this policy. This includes cases where a decision is made under this policy, from circumstances not in themselves being a disability, the effect of which adversely affects a disabled student as compared to a student without the disability – in such cases the student may agree with the College that a reasonable adjustment is made to any decision made under this policy.
5. This policy only relates to circumstances which directly affect assessments. It does not apply to missed learning, even if that missed learning has a consequential effect on the student's ability to submit or attend an assessment. The effect of

such missed learning, including any requests for alternative arrangements for diploma assessments, must be discussed with the College separately.

DEFINITION OF EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

6. The College defines extenuating circumstances as:

“Significant, unforeseen and normally short-term matters that result in a major impact on a student’s ability to complete, submit, prepare for or attend an assessment.”

INELIGIBLE CIRCUMSTANCES

6. Extenuating circumstances cover significant, unanticipated incidences and do not encompass normal life challenges that students are expected to deal with routinely. The following incidences will **not** be considered as valid for submission under this policy:
- 6.1. The down-time of College computer networks and problems with personal IT equipment. If a student encounters technical problems in submitting work on Moodle before a deadline then the student must email the work to the relevant member of academic staff and email Student and Academic Services (SAS) to explain what has happened;
 - 6.2. Loss of computer data (such data should be backed-up);
 - 6.3. Accommodation and travel problems;
 - 6.4. Personal job commitments, including internships;
 - 6.5. Participation in activities outside the student’s degree and diploma studies, even if organised by the College or the NCH Students’ Union and even if the student’s participation is to the benefit of the College. The only exception to this is for sporting commitments at national level (see Annex 1);
 - 6.6. Personal holidays;
 - 6.7. Peaks in assessment work demands;
 - 6.8. Religious festivals: these are known in advance and students should build any associated commitments in to their assessment planning;
 - 6.9. Financial difficulties;
 - 6.10. Complaints against staff or in relation to delivery of teaching. These are managed through the College’s Student Complaints Policy.

ELIGIBLE CIRCUMSTANCES

7. The areas that the College considers to be valid for extenuating circumstances are stated in Annex 1. This is not an exhaustive list; other circumstances will be considered as valid, provided that they satisfy the definition of extenuating circumstances in this policy and sufficient evidence is submitted in support.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

8. For purposes of equity and transparency, applications for extenuating circumstances must be supported by evidence.
9. Evidence in support of an application for extenuating circumstances must show, as far as is reasonably possible:
 - 9.1. That the circumstances existed, and if possible for what duration,

- 9.2. That the circumstances affected the student's ability to complete, submit, prepare for or attend an assessment, and if possible to what degree and duration, and
 - 9.3. That the student took all reasonable steps to mitigate the effects of the circumstances.
10. Annex 1 sets out examples of valid supporting evidence for each circumstance that the College considers to be a valid extenuating circumstance. Students are encouraged to speak to one of the SAS members, or the Extenuating Circumstances Officer (ECO), for advice on whether their circumstances are valid and what evidence would be required in support of an application.
11. A statement from a parent/guardian/spouse/partner/peer will not normally be accepted as independent corroboration. Similarly, a statement from an academic member of staff will not be accepted without the additional presence of appropriate documentary confirmation.
12. All evidence should be available in English. Where, for example, an overseas student is taken ill in their home country and corroborating evidence is provided in the language of that country, then it should be accompanied by a translation, certified officially as being correct e.g. by a Notary Public or by a member of staff who is fluent in that language.
13. The College expects that absence through illness must normally be supported by evidence from a medical practitioner and may seek to verify such evidence. Medical self-certification is not acceptable evidence for an extenuating circumstance submission. Students should plan their work so that they can accommodate the disruption of minor illness.

SUBMITTING AN EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES APPLICATION

14. The student must notify SAS and the ECO (Dr Callum Barrell, callum.barrell@nchlondon.ac.uk) as soon as:
 - 14.1. It is apparent that extenuating circumstances exist or will exist, even if the full extent and duration of the circumstances are not known, and
 - 14.2. It is reasonably practicable to do so.
 - 14.3. Notification at this stage does not have to be by email; students should use whatever means, including telephone, and including communication by indirect means, through other persons.
15. The notification above may take the form of an Extenuating Circumstances Application Form (Diploma). In any case, this form must be sent to SAS and the ECO as soon as it is reasonably practicable to do so. A form should be submitted even if the extent and duration of the circumstances are not yet known or if the evidence is not all available.
16. Further information, including evidence, must be sent as soon as it is available.
17. The ECO may ask the student for further information or evidence as appropriate.
18. If the form is not sent by the deadline for the assessment the student will need to provide evidence of why it was not practicable to send it earlier, else the application will not be considered.
19. The Extenuating Circumstances Application Form (Diploma) requires the student to request one of three outcomes:

- 19.1. An extension of time;
- 19.2. An alternative method of assessment;
- 19.3. Extenuating circumstances are considered where they affected performance in completing submitted work or undertaking other assessment.

DISPOSAL OF AN EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES APPLICATION

20. The ECO will consider the application and the supporting evidence and will decide if the application is approved, in accordance with this policy.
21. If the application is not approved then assessment will be made in accordance with the Diploma Regulations, including the imposition of any penalties for late submission or non-attendance.
22. If the application is approved then one of three outcomes will result and no penalties or capping of marks shall apply. The outcomes correspond to the options on the application form, although the option requested by the student will not necessarily be the outcome:
 - 22.1. An extension of time
 - 22.2. An alternative method of assessment
 - 22.3. Reconsideration of an assessment already completed
23. The following factors will be taken into account in making a decision:
 - 23.1. The request made by the student on the form, although this request will not necessarily be acceded to.
 - 23.2. The practicability of a late submission, taking into account whether other students will have had their marked assessments returned to them. An extension will normally not be more than 10 working days.
 - 23.3. The duration (or expected duration, if continuing) of the extenuating circumstances.
 - 23.4. The effect of the extenuating circumstances on the student and the duration of those effects.
 - 23.5. The practicability of providing an alternative method of assessment, taking into account the views of the tutor receiving the assessment.
24. This policy follows a “fit to study” approach, where it is up to the student concerned (with advice from others, if appropriate) to decide if they are fit to complete or attend assessments. By submitting the form the student is certifying that he or she is not fit to complete or attend the assessment, either in the allotted time period or at all.
25. Following the “fit to study” approach it is only in exceptional circumstances that the third option on the form will be considered; if an assessment has already been completed it is taken that the student considered themselves fit to undertake it. Only where the student was not in a position to make an accurate assessment of this, usually because of a certified illness that would have rendered them unable to make a rational judgment on their fitness will this option be followed, and then it will be necessary to provide evidence of the impairment of judgment, usually by the evidence of an appropriate medical professional.

APPEALS

26. If the student is not satisfied with any decision of the ECO, he or she may lodge an appeal with SAS.
27. The appeal will be heard by the College's Academic Board or by any other committee or person nominated by the Academic Board. Neither the ECO nor any member of the student's faculty shall decide the appeal.
28. The only grounds for appeal are that:
 - 28.1. The decision was not made in accordance with this policy, or
 - 28.2. The decision was not one that any reasonable person could have made.
29. Those determining the appeal may
 - 29.1. Dismiss the appeal, or
 - 29.2. Substitute their own decision.

CONFIDENTIALITY

30. In the absence of any other agreement the information on the Extenuating Circumstances Application Form (Diploma) and any supporting evidence will be confidential to the ECO and to SAS.
31. In the case of an appeal against a decision of the ECO the student agrees that the information shall be available to any persons deciding the appeal.
32. The ECO, or SAS, will be permitted to disclose that extenuating circumstances have been accepted to the tutor receiving the assessment, the head of the relevant faculty, a tutor writing a reference for the student or the student's personal tutor, without disclosing the extenuating circumstances, the evidence supporting it or why the application was accepted.
33. With the student's agreement the ECO, or SAS, may disclose the extenuating circumstances to a specified person or to any person. In the interests of transparency the student may wish to consider disclosing the extenuating circumstances and any supporting evidence to the tutor receiving the assessment, and to the Head of Faculty, but should not be put under any pressure to do so.

DATA PROTECTION ACT 1998

34. By submitting an Extenuating Circumstances Application Form (Diploma) and any supporting evidence, students agree to the College holding such personal data, including the supporting evidence, for the purposes of claims for extenuating circumstances. The College will hold all data in accordance with its notification under the 1998 Data Protection Act.

PARALLEL SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

35. The College places great emphasis on supporting its students and recognizes that students who have recourse to this policy may require help in both coping with the pressures of the circumstances and in making an effective submission for extenuating circumstances. Students will be encouraged to seek advice from the

College's support mechanisms, including counselling services, as detailed on the student website.

36. During the course of their studies students may also experience personal issues that adversely affect their ability to learn or undertake assessments, but that do not meet the criteria for extenuating circumstances. In all such cases students are advised to contact their course leader or Head of Faculty so that consideration can be given to appropriate support measures.

Annex 1: Valid extenuating circumstances and evidence

VALID CIRCUMSTANCE	EXAMPLES OF VALID SUPPORTING EVIDENCE
<p>Acute Illness</p> <p>An illness that is likely to have incapacitated the student during the period he/she might have reasonably been expected to spend time on preparation for submission or for sitting an assessment. This encompasses personal injury/accident with extended impact.</p> <p>Such an illness may also result from an acute episode of a chronic condition for which the student may already have special needs provision, but the episode has impacted on the student to a much greater extent than might normally be anticipated.</p>	<p>A doctor’s medical certificate relevant to the period of the claimed extenuating circumstances and stating that the student was unfit to study. A signed statement from a doctor in evidence of the requirement to attend hospital would also be appropriate. <u>Student self-certificates will not be accepted.</u></p>
<p>Illness of a dependent</p> <p>Acute illness/accident affecting a dependent/close relative that required the constant attention of the student.</p>	<p>A doctor’s medical certificate signed to verify the illness, or other medical evidence signed by an appropriate medical professional, together with a statement by the student, explaining why their personal attention was necessary and no other family member could be expected to provide support.</p>
<p>Bereavement</p> <p>Death of an immediate family member, partner or close friend.</p>	<p>Production of a copy Death Certificate or Coroner’s report within one month of the date of the bereavement. Immediate family members are defined as: child, parent, sibling or grandparent.</p>
<p>Court Attendance</p> <p>Jury Service or attendance at Court or a Tribunal as a witness, defendant or plaintiff, on the date the assessment was due to be submitted or assessment sat OR impacting on the period during which the student might reasonably have been expected to prepare for submission or revise for the assessment.</p>	<p>Official correspondence from the Court or Tribunal confirming attendance requirement.</p>

VALID CIRCUMSTANCE	EXAMPLES OF VALID SUPPORTING EVIDENCE
<p>Sport commitment at national level</p> <p>The student is selected to compete at national level at sporting events that require absence from the College on the date the assessment was due to be submitted or assessment sat.</p> <p>Training requirements associated with sporting commitments are not deemed valid extenuating circumstances.</p>	<p>Official correspondence from the relevant sporting body confirming the requirement to be available on specified dates.</p>
<p>Military Reserves</p> <p>The student is in the military reserves (Navy/Army/Air Force) and is required to undertake annual training.</p>	<p>Official correspondence from the Commanding Officer stating that the commitment cannot be moved to another date.</p>
<p>Victim of Crime</p> <p>The student was the victim of a crime that was reported to the appropriate authority for investigation and the nature of the crime was such that it was likely to have prevented the timely submission of an assessment or sitting an assessment; or to have impacted adversely on the student during the period in which the student might reasonably have been expected to prepare for submission or for sitting an assessment.</p>	<p>Copy of police/crime report.</p>

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