

School of Geography: Education Guidance

Extenuating Circumstances

At some point in your university degree you may encounter difficulties meeting deadlines because of health or personal circumstances beyond your control. This is where the 'Extenuating Circumstances' (EC) process can support you to submit assessments or sit exams to the best of your ability. The university's approach to ECs is underpinned by the principle that by taking an exam, or submitting coursework or an assessment, you declare yourself to be 'fit to sit' (in other words, feeling well and functioning effectively). It is your responsibility to let us know when you are **not** 'fit to sit'.

What is an Extenuating Circumstance?

'Extenuating circumstances are circumstances that are outside a student's control which may have a negative impact on a student's ability to undertake or complete any assessment so as to cast doubt on the likely validity of the assessment as a measure of the student's achievement'. (QMUL Academic Regulations, 2020-21)

The 'circumstances' mentioned in the definition above are usually personal or health problems. Health problems include your emotional wellbeing and mental health, as well as your physical health. Extenuating circumstances **do not include** events such as holidays, mis-reading timetables, workload (academic work, and formal employment), computer problems, or not being aware of rules, regulations or procedures. During the Covid-19 pandemic and the temporary shift to online learning, the School of Geography will consider computer and technical issues for EC claims on a case by case basis.

Who should I tell if I have extenuating circumstances?

If you are experiencing difficulties you should tell your Advisor, Student Experience and Admissions Administrator and/or the Senior Tutor as soon as possible. You may also want to contact the [Advice and Counselling Service](#). Unless you report your extenuating circumstances formally at the time, it is very difficult for the School of Geography to help and support you in your studies. Retrospective claims for extenuating circumstances are only considered in the most severe of cases, so it is your responsibility to tell someone about changes to your circumstances as soon as possible. The contacts mentioned above will be able to advise you on making an EC application and signpost appropriate support in the School and university.

How can I make a claim for extenuating circumstances?

The extenuating circumstances task on [MySIS](#) allows you to register extenuating circumstance claims against assessment elements/modules where it is felt that health problems or other circumstances led to non-attendance or non-submission. The task can be found on [MySIS](#) under its own section entitled Extenuating Circumstances. Any student registered for assessments will automatically have access to this task.

To add a claim, log in to your MySIS account and click on Extenuating Circumstances in the menu bar at the top of the screen. This will bring up a summary showing your personal details, details of your programme and various headings denoting different stages of the claim process. To add a new claim, click on the New Claim button. The application must be complete and formally submitted before it will be considered. For assessments where multiple pieces of coursework with different deadlines make up the assessment, e.g. a portfolio, when applying for an EC claim you will need to input the date of the individual assessment you are claiming for and outline in 'additional information' the title of this piece of assessment.

In the majority of instances, extenuating circumstances claims should be made by students themselves, but it is possible for the School to create a claim on your behalf if absolutely necessary. This should only ever be done on your request and based on evidence/self-certification details that you have provided.

When do I make a claim?

There are two points at which you can make a claim:

- i) **Before assessment deadlines** you can submit an EC claim and request an extension. This should be made at least 5 days before a deadline and the extension requested should be in line with the nature of the circumstance. For example, if you have surgery and are then asked to rest for 3 weeks the claim could reasonably request an extension of 3 weeks.
- ii) **After an assessment deadline** you can submit a claim if you submit work late or do not sit an exam because of an extenuating circumstance but were unable to submit an EC within 5 working days before the deadline. The claim should explain your circumstance. It would be expected that the delay in submitting your work align with the nature of your circumstance. General ECs cannot be applied for where marks or feedback have already been returned (see Long Term ECs below).

Do I need to provide supporting evidence?

From 2020-21, limited self-certification will be permitted for ECs. This means that you can self-certify for three separate extenuating circumstances applications per academic year using the approved university self-certification form accessed through MySIS. In other words, these claims will be considered **without** the submission of documentary evidence. For the fourth and subsequent incidents of ECs within one academic year, you will be required to produce documentary evidence. Please note that in some cases staff in the School of Geography may ask for further information, and sometimes request supporting evidence, if there are discrepancies in the claim being made.

Who will review my application, and when will a decision be made?

The Student Experience and Admissions Administrator and Senior Tutor will review the EC applications and aim to return decisions within 5 term-time working days. There may be periods during the year, such as around exam periods, when decisions may take longer. All extenuating circumstances claims are kept confidential within the School's extenuating circumstances committee. The committee membership is published on QMplus.

What happens if my claim is accepted?

You will not be liable for late penalties for coursework submitted after the deadline and before an agreed extension, if applicable. For exams, you will be given the opportunity for another attempt at the examination at the next available opportunity.

What happens if my claim is rejected?

You may receive a mark of 'zero fail' for the assessment you failed to sit/submit, or receive a mark with late submission penalties deducted for coursework. Depending on the number of assessment attempts available to you, you may be able to resubmit or resit failed assessments (capped at the pass mark) at the next available opportunity.

What happens if I can no longer meet the agreed extension?

You will need to make a new EC claim. This would be treated as a separate claim. Please note that the process outlined here is applicable for School of Geography modules only. For other modules (e.g. those on joint programmes), please refer to the specific EC guidance of the School responsible for the module. Please see the Advice and Counselling Service webpage on [Extenuating Circumstances](#).