

HE Extenuating Circumstances Policy

Who does this Policy Apply to?

This policy applies to students undertaking HE programmes which GLLM have been validated to deliver by the following HE awarding organisations;

- HE programmes validated by Bangor University for delivery by Grŵp Llandrillo Menai
- Edexcel/Pearson
- Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)

Students undertaking HE programmes awarded by other institutions should review the policies and procedures which are available in the Programme VLE or Handbook and awarding organisation website.

Purpose of the Policy

Students who are completing Higher Education programmes at Grŵp Llandrillo Menai should make every effort to ensure they are fit to study and undertake assessment as directed by the lecturing team. Students are also expected to make every effort to comply with assessment deadlines and complete the programme they are enrolled on within the timeframe expected. However, Grŵp Llandrillo Menai recognises there are times when a student will face adverse difficulties that will affect their academic progress.

The appropriate management of extenuating circumstances affecting students' study and assessment is significant in ensuring that academic standards are maintained and that students perceive that they are being treated fairly.

Policy Statement

Students are responsible for reporting any special/extenuating circumstances that may affect their results in a timely manner, using the relevant Extenuating Circumstances Procedure for the awarding institution. Grŵp Llandrillo Menai operates an evidence-based approach which will be considered through Extenuating Circumstances Board, to ensure that any claims for Extenuating Circumstances are treated fairly and equally. Students who demonstrate extenuating circumstances should not be unduly disadvantaged or advantaged over other students. The timing of the circumstances must be relevant to the claimed impact. Wherever possible, reasonable adjustments should be made to allow students to attend teaching activities and to complete coursework.

Implementation

The Extenuating Circumstances Board will meet regularly throughout the academic year at times when assessment deadlines are imminent. Notices will be posted in Programme Areas and Programme Leaders will inform students of the dates of Board. The policy will be implemented through the Extenuating Circumstances Procedure and which will be used by the Board to make a decision on the evidence supplied. The decision of the Board will be made know to students within 5 working days of the Board sitting.

Monitoring and Impact Measurement

The Extenuating Circumstances Policy is monitored and enhanced bi-annually after the September Resit Examination Boards by the Higher Education Quality and Standards Group.

Publication of Policy

This policy will be made publicly available bilingually on the Grŵp website and will be available to all members of staff via the Grŵp intranet.

Policy approved by: Tîm Polisi

Policy approval date: August 2017

Policy Review Date: August 2019

HE Extenuating Circumstances Procedure

Students are responsible for reporting any special/extenuating circumstances (such as ill-health, bereavement or personal circumstances) which may affect their results. Such circumstances must be reported as soon as is practicably possible. Where a student feels that there are circumstances that are affecting them adversely it is their responsibility to seek professional help, where relevant, to assist in resolving the problem.

Extenuating Circumstances are circumstances that:

- affect the student's ability to attend or complete an assessment or a number of assessments;
- affect the student's ability to complete a level, or the number of modules they are enrolled on in an academic year (ie when a student requests to transfer mode of study eg from full-time to part-time);
- are exceptional;
- are outside their control;
- can be corroborated by independent evidence;
- occurred during or shortly before the assessment in question.

Examples of circumstances which might be considered valid are:

- Hospitalisation, including operations;
- Health problems;
- Personal or psychological problems for which the student is undergoing counselling or has been referred to a counsellor or other qualified practitioner;
- Childbirth (including a partner in labour);
- Bereavement causing significant impact/effect;
- Major accident or injury, acute ailments or conditions which coincide with an assessment deadline or an examination or test, or are sufficiently long-lasting to impact on a significant part of a term;
- Clinical depression or other mental health problem;
- Recent burglary/theft/serious car accident;
- Jury service which cannot be deferred;
- Late diagnosis of, for example, dyslexia, resulting in no support or examination provision;
- Separation or divorce - student or parental (provided the facts and the effects are independently corroborated).

For equity and transparency purposes, applications for extenuating circumstances must be evidence based and judged by a panel within clearly defined guidelines. A statement from a parent/guardian/spouse/partner will not normally be accepted as independent corroboration. Similarly, a statement from an academic member of staff will not normally be accepted without the additional supporting documentary evidence.

Independent evidence is required to accompany any application to include: Death certificates, Medical certificates or GP letters or Legal Notices. Any application without one form of independent evidence will be returned to the student with a notification of what is still required. Medical certificates are acceptable if they:

- Are signed by a medical practitioner who has seen the student during or immediately after a period of illness;
- Indicate the date(s) when the student sought assistance;
- Provide sufficient detail without breaching confidentiality of the nature and seriousness of circumstances;
- Indicate the degree and duration of any incapacity;
- Medical certificates signed by family members are not acceptable;

Non-medical circumstances (e.g. bereavement) may be reported in writing, with a description of the

circumstances, when they occurred and, wherever possible, their duration. Boards of Examiners have the right to ask for additional information about extenuating circumstances if original documentation is not adequate or if the circumstances reported are not considered serious enough to warrant special consideration.

Examples of circumstances which would not normally be considered valid:

- Car broke down, train/bus delayed or cancelled, other public transport problems (unless the student can demonstrate that he or she had allowed adequate time to compensate for such problems as might reasonably have been anticipated)
- Child care problems which could have been anticipated
- Accidents or illness affecting relatives or friends (unless serious, or the student is a sole carer)
- Unspecified anxiety, mild depression or examination stress
- Cough, cold, upper respiratory tract Infection, sore throat, minor viral infection, unless the illness was at its peak at the time of an examination, end-of-module test or in-class test and the corroborating evidence refers to the impact on the student's performance
- Financial problems (other than cases of exceptional hardship)
- Holidays, house moves, family celebrations or other events where the student either has control over the date or may choose not to participate
- Computer problems, corrupt data, disk or printer failure or similar
- Problems with postal delivery of work (unless recorded delivery or registered mail)
- Time management problems (e.g. completing deadlines)
- Appointments (legal, medical etc) which could be rearranged
- Territorial Army commitments or similar (unless unavoidable)
- Sporting or recreational commitments (unless the student is representing GLLM in national competition or representing his/her country in international competition)
- De-registration

If a student attends a module but is unable to sit examinations or complete coursework because of extenuating circumstances, the student may:

Either

Sit a supplementary examination or complete coursework before the meeting of the Board of Examiners.

or

Sit a supplementary examination or complete coursework as a first attempt before or during the re-sit examination period.

The student must initially inform the Programme Leader that they will be unable to meet the deadline and request consideration for Extenuating Circumstances, if necessary. The Programme Leader can then provide support to the student to ensure they are aware of the process, the possible outcomes and, where feasible, identify support that would help the student towards completing the course work. The student will be referred to the Student Support Services offered by Grŵp Llandrillo Menai and will be informed of the services available by a member of the Student Support Team, who can help them independently with the Extenuating Circumstances procedure, if required.

The student must apply by filling in the Extenuating Circumstances Form. The deadlines for applications are communicated to students via their programme moodle page and via the course teaching teams. Deadlines are usually set one week prior to any Extenuating Circumstances Board meeting. The Extenuating Circumstances Form and supporting evidence must be sent to the Quality Assurance Co-ordinator via the Programme Leader by the appropriate deadline. Any applications that are received after the deadline will not be considered by the Panel.

All the applications and independent evidence is collated by Quality Assurance Co-ordinator and an overview of each case is presented to the Board. The applications will be considered by the Extenuating Circumstances Board based on the following:

- the amount of work affected by the circumstances;

- the length of time the circumstances will affect the student's work
- if they need any further support in order to complete outstanding work and
- where a student requests a change to their mode of study¹.

To pass a module students are required to meet specific learning outcomes. The Extenuating Circumstances Board will make recommendations to the Examination Board who must be satisfied that specific learning outcomes have been achieved prior to allowing a student to progress to the next stage or making an award. The decision of the Examination Board will be categorised as follows:

Recommendation to Board of Examiners	Typically used when one or more of the following apply:
No action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECs are not related to the student's studies. • ECs are not valid • Allowances for ECs already made, e.g. by allowing extra time or modified form of assessments. <p>Example: Illness that occurred after the summer assessment period.</p> <p>Example: Illness that affected Semester 1 examinations but extra time was allowed in the examinations</p>
Extension to submission dates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECs are agreed to be valid and require the learner to submit work by new deadlines • If marked work has been returned to students and the learner requesting EC's would benefit from assessment feedback the learner may be asked to complete a different assessment. <p>Example: Illness which resulted in non-attendance at College that meant the learner could not complete an assessment.</p>
Make an assessment attempt 'null and void' and allow an opportunity to repeat the assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowances for ECs have not already been made for assessments within specific module(s) • ECs apply to specific modules and there is no evidence that they had an impact beyond those specific modules. <p>Example: Personal/Health problems affecting a professional placement/module that is a core element of the programme.</p>
Poor performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECs are agreed to be valid and the learner submitted work by agreed deadlines • The learner wants EC's to be considered by Module and Examination Boards when academic progress is reviewed <p>Example: Illness affected a learner's ability to undertake coursework to the same standard as previously submitted work, although the learner did submit work by the deadline.</p>

¹ Where a student requests a transfer to their mode of study eg full-time to part-time study, it may be required to hold an exceptional Extenuating Circumstances Panel in addition to the timetabled panels.

The board of examiners may decide to increase the award class or defer a decision on academic achievement where the following apply:

<p>Increase degree class</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The student has a borderline mark. ● There is evidence that the ECs had an impact beyond specific modules in which allowances were made. ● Allowances for ECs cannot be made retrospectively at module level e.g. because of the form of assessment <p>Example: Illness that affected a Semester but that was diagnosed after the examination/assessment period.</p> <p>Example: Illness that affected the academic year. Allowances were made on the basis of symptoms but a severe condition was diagnosed after the examination/assessment period.</p>
<p>Defer decision until further details are available</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Further details/confirmation of the ECs have been requested ● A decision can be made at another Board of Examiners meeting (e.g. deferral from a Level 5 Board to a Level 6 (final) Board of Examiners) <p>Example: Evidence provided by the student is insufficient or the student is waiting for medical confirmation of ECs.</p>

As a result of an approved extenuating circumstances the action taken will be in accordance with the University Partner/Awarding Bodies rules and regulations.

In the week following an Extenuating Circumstances Board, the students and teaching team will receive notification of the outcomes by email and hard copy. The minutes of the Boards will form part of the documentation that Chairs and External Moderators and Examiners receive prior to the Examination Boards.

If the student wishes to appeal against an application that has been rejected, the Quality Assurance Co-ordinator will firstly assess if the independent evidence fully supported the dates noted on the Extenuating Circumstances Form. If any aspect of the Form is incomplete, or further evidence is required, contact will be made directly with the student and the Personal Tutor to request this information or amend the form. If the evidence still does not fully meet the criteria for approval, the student and tutor will be formally notified in a letter and the minutes noted to reflect the final rejection of the application and the relevant reasons.

Retrospective claims of extenuating circumstances will not normally be considered unless there were the most exceptional reasons for not doing so. This would normally only be because the student was unable to disclose the circumstances in advance because a medical condition has only just been diagnosed. Please note that unless there are exceptional circumstances as detailed above, extenuating circumstance claims which are submitted retrospectively will be deemed to be invalid.

If a student is required to undertake referred assessments during the summer period and are affected by extenuating circumstances during this time, they must submit a new claim form to cover this period. They should be prepared for the Referred Extenuating Circumstances Board to decide that referred modules, not achieved by the end of the academic year, are to be retaken during the next academic year. This may mean they do not progress to the next stage of their programme or graduate until the end of the next academic year. Each case will be considered on an individual basis.

If the student is still not satisfied, they have the right to appeal any judgement the Board has made via the Grŵp Llandrillo Menai Complaints Procedure.

Extenuating Circumstances: Application Form

You can download this form at www.gllm.ac.uk/hepolicies/

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Gallwch chi lawrlwytho'r ffurflen hon ar wahân ar www.gllm.ac.uk/hepolicies/