

Extenuating Circumstances Policy

Introduction

This Extenuating Circumstances policy is to be used where circumstances are believed to be unforeseen, arising close to or during assessment and have had a significant and detrimental impact on the student's ability to comply with the demands of the assessment or attendance on a course.

The procedure applies to all forms of assessment which:

- Have been missed (in the case of timetabled assessments)
- Have been completed after the published deadline (in the case of a non-timetabled assessment)
- It is anticipated will be completed after the published deadline (in the case of a non-timetabled assessment)
- Have been attempted in the presence of extenuating circumstances (in the case of either a timetabled or non-timetabled assessment)

Where a student is aware of a disability or long-term medical condition, or other circumstances that are expected to have an impact on their performance in assessment, they should make their teacher aware of their circumstances at the earliest possible opportunity so that appropriate arrangements can be put in place.

The following procedure is also to be used in cases where circumstances are unforeseen, arising close to or during assessment. By missing an assessment or a class, the student will receive a mark of 0 if the examination body or BSL First decides that the assessment was missed without 'sufficient cause'.

Non-compliance with the Assessment Requirement(s)

A student who is unable to comply with the published timetabled assessment requirement(s) must, at the earliest possible opportunity, contact the course administrator with a full explanation.

Coursework extension requests and other requests relating to coursework should be made to the member of staff responsible for the assessment prior to the published submission date with supporting evidence. If an extension is agreed, the revised submission date should be confirmed in writing, or by email, by the course administrator.

The extenuating circumstances request should be submitted as soon as the student knows that s/he will not comply with the assessment requirement(s). The absolute latest date for submission is the seventh working day after the affected assessment. If the request is not submitted within this period, the student may receive a mark of 0 for the assessment(s).

BSL First reserves the right as to whether to consider extenuating circumstances claims that are submitted after the seventh working day from the affected assessment. BSL First is entitled to reject automatically and without consideration all extenuating circumstances claims that are submitted after the deadline above. The only exception to this provision is where the student provides authoritative evidence (e.g. from a doctor) that they were incapacitated through illness and unable to submit the extenuating circumstances any earlier. Where such an exception is made, the student's claim will be considered under this policy without prejudice.

Notwithstanding the above, extenuating circumstances claims will in any case not be considered if they are submitted more than one month after notification of the outcome of an examination board.

All claims of extenuation made under this policy need to be supported by independent, reliable, documentary evidence of inability to undertake the assessment.

Upon receipt of a written claim, BSL First Limited will determine whether or not the student has 'sufficient cause' for non-compliance with the requirements of the assessment.

It is acknowledged that there may be occasions where the supporting evidence is felt to be particularly sensitive. In such cases, students may request that the claim of extenuation be given limited and minimal circulation. BSL First will adhere to its Data Protection Policy in all cases when handling supporting evidence.

Impaired Performance in a Completed Assessment

Where an assessment is completed but the student believes that there were extenuating circumstances that affected their performance, section 2 of this policy (see above) should be followed.

Standard of Evidence

The 'burden of proof' to support a claim on extenuation lies with the student at all times. Evidence presented by students must meet the following standards and should:

- Be written by appropriately qualified professionals who are independent to the student
- Be on headed paper and signed and dated by the author. Evidence presented by email may be acceptable if the author has sent the email from the official domain name of the author's organisation
- Be dated at the time the reported extenuating circumstances took place and not be retrospective
- Be in English or in BSL. It is the student's responsibility to provide supporting documentation and any translation should be undertaken by an accredited translator
- Be original. Copies of supporting evidence will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances
- Be unaltered by the student. Documentation that has been amended for any reason will be deemed inadmissible
- BSL First should only uphold a student's claim of extenuating circumstances when, in their opinion, all of the above are fully satisfied

Acceptable Circumstances

The following gives examples of the kind of acceptable circumstances (i.e. where the student has demonstrated 'sufficient cause') and the associated evidence that is normally required. This is given without prejudice and for general guidance. It is not exhaustive, definitive or prescriptive. BSL First considers each claim of extenuating circumstances on its own merits and as an individual case.

- **Long-Term Illness**
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An original medical certificate or letter from an appropriate medical professional (or equivalent) confirming the nature of the illness and the likely impact it has had on the student's ability to undertake formal assessment.

- **Short-Term Illness**

Short-term illness (less than 7 days) will not normally be regarded as an extenuating circumstance with regard to assessed coursework, where the student is given a number of weeks/months to complete and submit such work. It shall be for the teacher or Managing Director to decide whether this has affected the student's performance and whether an extension to a deadline should be granted.

- **Bereavement**

Where there is a demonstrably close relationship between the student and the deceased, a death certificate or a letter confirming the death from an independent person (usually not a family member) with their contact details provided.

- **Acute Personal/Emotional Circumstances**

An original medical certificate or letter from an appropriate medical professional (or equivalent) confirming the nature of the illness and/or circumstances and the likely impact it has had on the student's ability to undertake formal assessment.

- **Hospitalisation**

A medical letter/certificate from the relevant hospital confirming the nature and severity of the student's circumstances and the likely impact it has had on the student's ability to undertake formal assessment.

- **Family illness**

A medical certificate/letter from an independent medical professional confirming the nature and severity of the family circumstances and the likely impact it has had on the student's ability to undertake formal assessment.

- **Victim of Crime**

A written statement of events, which is supported by written evidence from the Police (including a crime reference number). Where relevant, an original medical certificate or letter from an appropriate medical professional (or equivalent) confirming the impact the reported crime has had on the student's ability to undertake formal assessment.

- **Religious Observance**

If the student has submitted an extenuating circumstances request by the required deadline and it has not been possible to make alternative arrangements, BSL First should take reasonable steps to provide an alternative assessment opportunity. Absence from an assessment for reason of religious observance, where no extenuating circumstances request has been submitted, or where the relevant permission for absence has not been obtained prior to the assessment, will not be deemed an acceptable extenuating circumstance.

If a student has made, or is making, a complaint under the Complaints Policy and feels that the matters covered by that complaint may have affected their assessment performance, an extenuating circumstances request should be submitted in the normal way with appropriate evidence, as detailed in section 4 of this policy.

Confidentiality of Evidence

The confidential nature of information provided by students will be respected by BSL First in accordance with its Data Protection Policy.

Confidential information will only be shared within the company on a 'need to know' basis. Any student wishing to restrict the sharing of such information should make his/her wishes known to the Director, preferably in writing. Students should be aware that BSL First cannot respond to a student's circumstances if it remains unaware of relevant information.

Normally such wishes will be respected unless to do so would be against the best interests of the BSL First community or the interests of safety or security of any person.

Unacceptable Circumstances

The following gives examples of circumstances that are likely to be considered as unacceptable (i.e. where the student has NOT demonstrated 'sufficient cause'). This is given for general guidance and is not exhaustive, definitive or prescriptive. BSL First considers each claim of extenuating circumstances on its own merits and as an individual case.

- **Transport issues**
It is expected that students will ensure that they arrive at the assessment on time, irrespective of the form of transport used or relied upon. An inability to travel as a result of circumstances beyond the student's control may though constitute sufficient cause.
- **Pre-booked holidays**
It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they are available for all assessments. All holidays should take place at a time that will not impact on the student's availability to undertake or prepare for an assessment.
- **Misreading the examination timetable**
It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they know and remember the location, time and duration of all formal assessments.
- **Paid employment or voluntary work**
It is expected that students will ensure that any paid employment or voluntary work does not interfere with their ability to engage with their studies or assessments.
- **'Exam Stress'**
Feeling 'below par' leading up to and during an assessment(s) is a common experience of many students. It is not considered to be an acceptable extenuating circumstance.
- **IT and/or Computer failure**
Loss or corruption of files is not an acceptable extenuating circumstance. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all work, which is electronically stored, generated and/or submitted, is sufficiently backed up.
- **Criminal conviction**
If a student is convicted of a criminal offence any disruption caused by the investigation or sentence is not an acceptable extenuating circumstance.