

The University has approved a new [Policy on and Procedures for Exceptional Circumstances](#) which is effective from the Autumn Term 2021/22. However, the previous policy, below, continues to apply to taught postgraduate students who were due to complete in or before September 2021 and have an extension until not later than 1 November 2021.

## Guide to policy and procedures for teaching and learning



### Section 6: Programme-related matters

# Policy on and procedures relating to extenuating circumstances (from Autumn Term 2017)

*[This policy is effective from the Autumn Term 2017, except in the case of taught postgraduate programmes which finish in September 2017.]*

**[During the Covid-19 pandemic, a pragmatic approach will be taken as to what may be an acceptable extenuating circumstance. Please see the list under 'Evidencing reasons for your request' on the [Essentials website](#) for additional information on extenuating circumstance in relation to the pandemic.**

The University has also approved a number of temporary revisions to this Extenuating Circumstances Policy for the Summer Term and Resit Period 2021; these are published in a separate document, available at: [http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/Temporary\\_revisions\\_to\\_EC.pdf](http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/Temporary_revisions_to_EC.pdf)

*[For the purposes of the process described in this document, in international branch campuses: the Senior Tutor, or their designate, will fulfil the role of School Director of Academic Tutoring unless otherwise stated; references to the School should be understood as referring to the Section; references to Support Centres and Student Support Coordinator should be understood as referring to UoRM Campus Student Services and the Section Senior Tutor. Where this arrangement causes a conflict of interest for the Section Senior Tutor, the relevant School Director of Academic Tutoring at UoR-UK will make decisions at School level as prescribed below.*

*For the purposes of the processes described in this document, in Henley Business School references to 'School' should be taken to mean 'programme area' and reference to School Director of Academic Tutoring should be taken to mean Programme Area Senior Tutor.*

*References to the Support Centres should be understood as programme administration teams.*

*It should be noted that where reference is made to services by RUSU, this includes equivalent services at international branch campuses.*

*Research students should seek advice from the Graduate School.]*

## Introduction

1. Extenuating circumstances are defined as circumstances which are outside the control of the student and negatively affect performance and which can be supported by appropriate evidence.

2. The purpose of this document is to outline the appropriate policy and procedures that staff and students should follow when students experience circumstances which have negatively impacted on their performance. The policy is designed to do four things:
  - a. ensure that students are appropriately supported by their Schools when extenuating circumstances are brought to the attention of Schools in a timely manner;
  - b. ensure that all students are treated fairly and equitably in the light of extenuating circumstances;
  - c. outline the responsibilities of students in informing the University of circumstances which are affecting their performance; and
  - d. protect the academic integrity of programmes for all students.

This policy should be read alongside the *Policy on and procedures for students returning to or repeating study*, the *Policy and procedures for suspensions* and the *Policy on and procedures relating to student academic engagement and fitness to study*.

Staff and students should also refer to the University's Essentials webpage for further guidance and FAQs in relation to the extenuating circumstance process (<https://www.reading.ac.uk/essentials/The-Important-Stuff/Rules-and-regulations/Extenuating-circumstances>).

3. In order to maintain the standards of scholarship, personal integrity and communal life essential to the existence and good name of the University, students are expected to take responsibility for organising their academic work, their personal lives and their participation in the University community in line with the University's *Regulations for Student Conduct* (see *Section G of the University Calendar* [www.reading.ac.uk/internal/Calendar/](http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/Calendar/)).

Further information on the expectations of students' participation in the University community can be found in the *Reading Student Charter* [www.reading.ac.uk/internal/student/OnlineStudentHandbook/osh-student-charter.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/student/OnlineStudentHandbook/osh-student-charter.aspx), and the *Statement of Learner Responsibilities* [www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/qualitysupport/learnerresponsibilities.pdf](http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/qualitysupport/learnerresponsibilities.pdf)

4. Students are required to submit assignments by specified deadlines. Work which is submitted late, without an agreed extension, will be penalised in accordance with the University's policy on late submission of coursework: [www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/qualitysupport/penaltiesforlatesubmission.pdf](http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/qualitysupport/penaltiesforlatesubmission.pdf).
5. In following the procedures outlined in this document, staff should at all times ensure that they use the appropriate level of confidentiality.
6. The procedures relating to extenuating circumstances assign principal responsibility for decision-making to:
  - a. School Directors of Academic Tutoring for decisions in respect of coursework (subject to limits), in-class tests (subject to limits) and absence from classes where participation contributes to assessment. The School Director of Academic Tutoring may appoint a deputy in case of absence;
  - b. the University Standing Committee on Special Cases (USCSC) for decisions in respect

of examinations and eligibility for remedies not within the power of School Directors of Academic Tutoring.

## What is meant by “extenuating circumstances”?

7. The University deems that an extenuating circumstance is a circumstance which is outside the control of the student which negatively affects performance and which can be supported by appropriate evidence. Students must describe the impact their circumstances have had on their studies.
  
8. The University considers the following to be extenuating circumstances:
  - a) The death or serious illness of a close family member or friend
  - b) Serious short-term illness or injury that is impacting a student’s ability to study
  - c) Worsening of an ongoing illness or disability- including mental health conditions
  - d) diagnosis of disability during a student’s programme of study in accordance with the policy on *Retrospective allowance in examinations and assessment for students diagnosed with a disability during their programme of study*. See paragraph 61 on the consideration of these cases.
  - e) Significant personal or family crisis directly affecting the student
  - f) Witnessing or involvement in a traumatic incident
  - g) Severe financial difficulties impacting a student’s ability to study
  - h) statutory parental leave (more information can be found in the Students with Parental Responsibilities Policy\_ [www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/cqsd/Studentparentalpolicy.pdf](http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/cqsd/Studentparentalpolicy.pdf));
  - i) Court attendance, jury service, other public duty or obligation
  - j) Competing in sport or participation in other activity at national or international level
  - k) Job interviews (event assessment only)

This list is not exhaustive and other circumstances are considered appropriate so long as circumstances meet the definition above.
  
9. Where there is a requirement on the University to provide appropriate academic provision, this requirement has not been met and the deficiency has negatively impacted the performance of the student, the student should inform their School of the issue immediately. If students wish to appeal the decision of the School, they can raise a Stage 1 formal complaint. Circumstances appropriate to this process will include disruption to examinations e.g. due to fire alarms. Please refer to the Student Complaints Procedure for further information: [www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/stdserv/Master copy - Student Complaints Procedure.pdf](http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/stdserv/Master_copy_-_Student_Complaints_Procedure.pdf).

## What is **not** considered “extenuating circumstances” and where can students find support for these matters?

10. The following circumstances **are not** considered extenuating by the University, although the University has services in place which can support and advise students who are dealing with some of the difficulties indicated below:

- a. A medical condition, medical circumstances or disability for which no supporting evidence has been presented;
- b. A medical condition supported by *retrospective* medical evidence—that is, evidence that is not based on a consultation at the time of the illness (or shortly afterwards), e.g. a doctor’s note which states that the student was seen after the illness occurred and that the student declared that they had been ill previously;
- c. A self-certified illness or medical circumstances;
- d. Any circumstances for which appropriate adjustments have already been made by the University and where there is no evidence of a worsening of the condition which requires further consideration;
- e. Assessment-related stress which is not diagnosed as an illness or documented in the Individual Learning Plan;
- f. An illness occurring after an examination/in-class test or the deadline for submission of coursework;
- g. A minor illness such as a cough or cold;
- h. Pregnancy, except for morning sickness or where there are complications relating to the pregnancy which medical evidence can substantiate, and except for a period of three weeks immediately preceding the due date;
- i. Assessments and examinations scheduled within a short period;
- j. Poor working practice such as:
  - i. Failure to back up electronic documents regularly and securely;
  - ii. Failure on the part of the student to acquaint themselves with the times, dates, and places where assessments were to be submitted or examinations to be sat;
  - iii. Poor time management;
- k. Problems with network facilities, personal computers or printers, unless you are unable to access campus. Faults associated with the VLE, Turnitin or University maintained network facilities preventing online assessment submission will be managed in line with policy outlined in the Online Submission Protocols;
- l. Where students are studying on a full-time basis, issues relating to paid employment except in cases of work placements which contribute to the programme of study;
- m. House moves, renovations or other routine accommodation difficulties;
- n. Holidays, including attendance at marriages, festivals and like events including religious festivals. For more information, please see the *Code of practice for supporting students relating to religion, belief and teaching and learning*; [www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/qualitysupport/religionandbelief.pdf](http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/qualitysupport/religionandbelief.pdf);
- o. Death or illness of a pet;

- p. Circumstances stated to be unforeseen that a reasonable person would view as foreseeable or preventable.

This list is not exhaustive and further information on what are not accepted as extenuating circumstances can be found in *Annex 1- Further information on evidence required to support extenuating circumstances* and on the University's Essentials webpage (<https://www.reading.ac.uk/essentials/The-Important-Stuff/Rules-and-regulations/Extenuating-circumstances>).

11. The University is committed to offering support and guidance for students on the above matters and therefore students should seek advice from the various student support services available. For a complete list of services and advice centres, students should refer to the Essentials website: [student.reading.ac.uk/essentials/support-and-wellbeing.aspx](https://www.reading.ac.uk/essentials/support-and-wellbeing.aspx). Students may also wish to seek guidance and support from the RUSU Advice Service: [www.rusu.co.uk/advice/](http://www.rusu.co.uk/advice/).

## How do students notify the University of extenuating circumstances?

12. Useful definitions:

- a) Deadline assessments—those assessments for which students are required to adhere to a deadline for submission; and
- b) Event assessments—those assessments which are not easily recreated and for which an extension is not appropriate, e.g. centrally organised examinations, practical assessments and in-class tests administered locally by Schools/Departments.

13. Students must inform the University if they believe that they have extenuating circumstances through submission of an *Extenuating Circumstances* form, normally to the relevant Student Support Coordinator or to the relevant Programme Administrator in Henley Business School (HBS) or ISLI. A single form is used for extension requests for deadline assessments as well as in relation to event assessments. The form can be found here:

[www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/student/exa-circumstances.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/student/exa-circumstances.aspx).

14. *Extenuating circumstances* forms will only be given substantive consideration by the University if they are accompanied by suitable relevant evidence. Details of acceptable evidence can be found in *Annex 1 - Further information on evidence required to support extenuating circumstances*. **Evidence should be submitted with the form, but, in any case, must be received within 10 working days of submission of the form** unless there is an exceptional reason why the evidence could not be provided within the specified timeframe. Students must submit evidence (either electronically or original hard copy) in accordance with information and advice provided by the School.
15. If, in exceptional circumstances, a student does not wish their circumstances to be disclosed to the School Director of Academic Tutoring in their School, they should submit an *Extenuating Circumstances* form to the relevant Student Support Coordinator or to the relevant Programme Administrator in HBS or ISLI, in accordance with the normal procedure,

but should include a written request that a decision be taken at University level without the details of their case being shared with the School Director of Academic Tutoring or other academic staff within their School or Department. The Support Coordinator or the relevant Programme Administrator in HBS or ISLI will inform the student's School Director of Academic Tutoring that an *Extenuating Circumstances* form has been submitted and will also inform the School Director of Academic Tutoring of the decision but will not disclose any details about the circumstances to the School. Information included in the extenuating circumstances form will be made available to the University Special Cases Sub-Committee and will remain confidential.

## When must students notify the University of extenuating circumstances?

16. The University has set deadlines by which students are required to notify extenuating circumstances and the mechanism of notification is submission of the *Extenuating Circumstances* form accompanied by suitable relevant evidence.

### Deadline assessments

17. Students must normally submit an *Extenuating Circumstances* form to the relevant Student Support Coordinator or the relevant Programme Administrator in HBS or ISLI before the deadline for submission of the coursework.

### Event assessments

18. Separate deadlines apply to end of Part examinations which are centrally organised and to in-class tests administered locally by Schools/Departments.
- a) End of Part examinations - Students must normally submit an *Extenuating Circumstances* form to the relevant Student Support Coordinator or the relevant Programme Administrator in HBS or ISLI by specified dates which can be found on the Examinations, Student Records & Graduation Office website: [www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/student/exa-circumstances.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/student/exa-circumstances.aspx).
  - b) In-class tests – Students must normally submit an *Extenuating Circumstances* form to the relevant Student Support Coordinator or the relevant Programme Administrator in HBS or ISLI before the date of the in-class test and no later than five working days after the date of the test. Students who expect to be absent from an in-class test must inform the relevant lecturer and Support Centre in advance of the test, if possible.

### Late submission of *Extenuating Circumstances* forms

19. Forms submitted after the relevant deadline will not normally be considered. If, however, the student was not able to submit the form due to hospitalisation, incarceration or equivalent physical or mental incapacity, then a statement which details the reason for the lateness must be submitted in addition to the *Extenuating Circumstances* form. Statements must be substantiated with evidence and will follow the normal requirements for relevant evidence.
20. If a form is submitted following the publication of a result, the form will be forwarded to the School Director of Academic Tutoring for comment and then referred to the USCSC, which is

responsible for the decision in such cases. A student who has graduated is normally deemed to have accepted the result.

#### Advice on completing an *Extenuating Circumstances* form

21. Students should seek advice prior to submission of an *Extenuating Circumstances* form from one or more of the following: the relevant Student Support Coordinator or the Teaching and Learning Officer and relevant Programme Administrator in HBS or the Programme Administrator in ISLI; the Advice Service at RUSU; the School Director of Academic Tutoring; their Academic Tutor, or the School/Department Director of Teaching and Learning.

## Preliminary processing of an extenuating circumstances form

22. On receipt of the *Extenuating Circumstances* form, the Support Centre reviews the form to check that it is complete and that appropriate evidence has been provided. If the Support Centre has concerns over the evidence/ lack of evidence provided they will contact the student asking for deficiencies to be remedied and setting a deadline for submission of further evidence which will normally be 10 working days from the request for further evidence. The form and evidence is forwarded to the School Director of Academic Tutoring of the School which owns the student's programme, with a note indicating *either* that the form is complete and appropriate evidence submitted *or* that further information or evidence is being requested.
23. When any further information or evidence has been provided, the Support Centre will forward the further information or evidence to the School Director of Academic Tutoring of the School which owns the programme. If the student does not provide further evidence when requested, the Support Centre will inform the School Director of Academic Tutoring accordingly.
24. Having received the form and supporting evidence, the School Director of Academic Tutoring will give them consideration, having due regard to the supporting evidence, and will proceed as follows:
- a. Where the case relates to coursework, an in-class test, or absence from classes where participation contributes to the assessment:
    - i. make a substantive decision on the action to be taken provided the action lies within their powers, as indicated in paragraph 27 below; or
    - ii. if they believe that the appropriate action lies beyond their powers, refer the case to the USCSC with a recommendation on the action to be taken.

These processes are set out in paragraphs 27-34 below.
  - b. Where the case relates to an examination, refer the case to the USCSC with a recommendation in respect of the appropriate action.

This process is set out in paragraphs 35-60 below.

25. In addition, where appropriate, options should be discussed in relation to the needs which the student might have and any support that the University can provide. It may be appropriate to encourage the student to consult relevant support services, in particular Counselling and Wellbeing, the Disability Advisory Service, the University Study Advisers and the Advice Service at RUSU. The student may also be encouraged to consult a medical practitioner.

## Decisions in respect of coursework extensions, in-class tests, and absence from classes

Responsible body: School Directors of Academic Tutoring and, following referral in specified categories of cases, USCSC

26. The School Director of Academic Tutoring, or a designated alternate, has the authority to make the following decisions regarding an *Extenuating Circumstances* case in relation to coursework (please note that the School Director of Academic Tutoring does not have the authority to reconsider a mark awarded for an assessment, except for the removal of a penalty for late submission):
- a) Impose an appropriate deadline for submission of evidence but not normally more than 10 working days from the request for submission of further evidence;
  - b) Reject on grounds of insufficient evidence;
  - c) Reject on grounds that the request is made due to an insubstantial event and is not “extenuating” as defined in paragraph 8 above;
  - d) [In respect of coursework] Removal of a penalty for late submission;
  - e) [In respect of coursework] Provide an extension to the deadline of assessed coursework;
  - f) [In respect of in-class tests] Rearrange the assessment for a later date. (This would normally require a different test in order to ensure the integrity of the assessment);
  - g) Vary the assessment method for a student for coursework/in-class tests contributing no more than 20% of a module. School Directors of Academic Tutoring may wish to consult Module Conveners and/or Programme Director when making this allowance to ensure the student has had the opportunity to demonstrate all learning outcomes;
  - h) Make a recommendation to the USCSC to vary the assessment method for a student for coursework/in-class tests contributing more than 20% of the module. Where the proposed variation is substantial or complex, the School Director of Academic Tutoring may wish to consult an External Examiner for the programme before referral to USCSC;
  - i) Exempt a student from coursework/in-class tests contributing no more than 10% the module. In granting an exemption, the School Director of Academic Tutoring should have regard to the extent to which the student is able to fulfil the learning outcomes

of relevant modules on the basis of the remaining assessment and may wish to consult Module Convenors and Programme Director. It is important to note that the School Director of Academic Tutoring does not have the authority to reconsider the mark achieved even if circumstances have affected performance.

Where an exempted piece of work is one of a number of assessments for a module, by default the module mark will be calculated through the proportional redistribution of weighting across all other pieces of assessment for the module. In exceptional cases the School Director of Academic Tutoring may make a case to the USCSC for an alternative model for the calculation of the module mark (e.g. the School may specify the redistribution of weightings). Examples of exceptional cases may include instances where a student's personal circumstances would render a mode of assessment unfeasible or inappropriate; ; where the standard redistribution would not assign an appropriate relative weight to specific learning outcomes; or where there may be implications for accreditation requirements.;

- j) Make a recommendation to the USCSC to exempt a student from coursework/in-class tests contributing more than 10% of the module. In recommending an exemption, the School Director of Academic Tutoring may wish to consult an External Examiner for the programme before referral to USCSC.
  - k) In the case of in-class tests and coursework where other provisions are not applicable, make a recommendation to the USCSC that the student be Deemed Not to have Sat in relevant assessments;
  - l) In the event that a proposed extension or a rearranged date for an in-class test would fall beyond the student's normal period of registration for the programme, make a recommendation (with a detailed rationale) to the USCSC. It should be noted that only the USCSC has the power to grant such an extension or a date for an in-class test beyond the normal period of registration;
  - m) Authorise absence from lectures, laboratory classes, seminars, workshops and tutorials, where participation contributes to assessment;
27. Where a request is time-sensitive and the provision of evidence is unavoidably delayed, the School Director of Academic Tutoring may agree a conditional outcome in the absence of evidence. A deadline will be set for the submission of the evidence (normally 10 days in line with the standard policy). The Student Support Coordinator or the relevant Programme Administrator in HBS or ISLI will monitor the deadline; the student must alert the Student Support Coordinator or the relevant Programme Administrator in HBS or ISLI if they are unable to meet the deadline, and, where there is good reason, an extension to the deadline will be granted. If no evidence is submitted by the deadline the provisional outcome will be rescinded and any relevant penalties will be applied. The submitted evidence is assessed by the School Director of Academic Tutoring and, if the evidence is deemed sufficient, the outcome will be confirmed; if the evidence is not deemed sufficient, the provisional outcome will be rescinded and any relevant penalties will be applied.
28. Where a School is responsible for a programme or subject area in a branch campus,

the School Director of Academic Tutoring in the School and Section Head in the branch campus will liaise to ensure that decisions across campuses are consistent and equitable.

29. If a student asks for an exemption for one piece of coursework and an alternative assessment for another deadline or event assessment which together represent more than 20% of the module assessment, then the case should be considered at the USCSC, to which the School Director of Academic Tutoring should provide a recommendation. Where the proposed variation is substantial or complex the School Director of Academic Tutoring should consult the External Examiners of the programme before referral to USCSC
30. Where a student presents an extenuating circumstances case based on chronic medical circumstances not previously known to the University or circumstances which have become more severe, the School Director of Academic Tutoring should advise the student to consult Counselling and Wellbeing and/or the Disability Advisory Service, provide support, and, if appropriate, consider whether the student is fit to study. If appropriate, the possibility of suspension or the possibility of withdrawal from the University should be discussed with the student. The student should be informed of the relevant policies and procedures. For further details of the procedure relating to suspensions, please refer to the *Policy on and procedures for suspensions*. In these cases, it may be appropriate to refer the student through the Academic Engagement and Fitness to Study procedure ([www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/academicengagement\\_fitnessstudy.pdf](http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/academicengagement_fitnessstudy.pdf)).
31. Having determined how to proceed in the case, the School Director of Academic Tutoring specifies, as appropriate, on the extenuating circumstances form:
  - a. The substantive decision on the action to be taken in the case; or
  - b. An instruction to refer the case to USCSC, together with a recommendation on an appropriate action. The subsequent consideration of these cases is described in paragraphs 35-60 below.

The School Director of Academic Tutoring submits to the Support Centre their substantive decision or their instruction to refer the case to USCSC.

32. In respect of extenuating circumstances forms in relation to coursework, in-class tests, and absence from classes where participation contributes to assessment, students will be notified of a decision, through **their University email address**, as soon as possible and normally within 10 working days from the date on which the complete application (form and supporting evidence) had originally been received, unless the request is subject to consultation with a Teaching and Learning Dean or External Examiner or has been referred for a University-level decision (in which case the student will be advised of the process being followed and an indicative timeframe for a decision).
33. If a student wishes to appeal against a School-level decision in respect of an extenuating circumstances application, they are required to submit a completed 'Appeal of an extenuating circumstances decision' form to the Student Appeals and Academic Misconduct Officer ([ecfappeals@reading.ac.uk](mailto:ecfappeals@reading.ac.uk)) for consideration by the Extenuating Circumstances Appeals Board (ECAB). The procedure detailed in paragraph 64 applies.

## Decisions in relation to examinations and cases referred to USCSC by School Directors of Academic Tutoring

Responsible body: University Standing Committee on Special Cases

34. In those extenuating circumstances cases which relate to examinations, the form is referred to the School Director of Academic Tutoring, who is asked to comment on the case, offer a recommendation on the action to be taken, and return the form to the Support Centre for submission to USCSC. The recommendations should have regard to the decisions available to the USCSC indicated in paragraph 40 below.
35. The University Standing Committee on Special Cases has a rolling membership (i.e. any post-holder for the designated roles can serve on a panel). Each meeting shall be attended by:
- A Teaching and Learning Dean (who may vary from meeting to meeting) (Chair)
  - Two School Senior Directors of Academic Tutoring (which, for the avoidance of doubt, includes Section Heads at branch campuses)
  - A member of Student and Applicant Services nominated by the Director of Student and Applicant Services
  - Director of Administration or the Teaching and Learning Officer for HBS (or delegate with the approval of Chair)
  - Secretary to be appointed by the Director of Student and Applicant Services
36. A School Director of Academic Tutoring on the panel will not contribute to the discussion or decision in respect of cases from their own School.
37. Advice from a professional from the University Medical Practice, Counselling, and the Disability Advisory Services will be available to the panel at its request.
38. The USCSC will normally meet fortnightly during the Autumn and Spring Terms and weekly during the Summer Term, during the resit period and in the week immediately following examination periods.
39. The USCSC has the authority to make the following decisions regarding an *Extenuating Circumstances* case :
- a) **Reject on grounds of insufficient evidence;**
  - b) **Reject on grounds that the request is made due to an insubstantial event and is not “extenuating” as defined in paragraph 8 above;**
  - c) **Agree that the student’s circumstances qualify as extenuating circumstances and that the student be Deemed Not to have Sat in relevant assessment(s) and thereby in relevant modules.** In evaluating a student’s circumstances, the panel will not normally consider marks achieved by the student. DNS can be offered in advance of the assessment event.

In those cases where the USCSC concludes, on the basis of evidence, that the circumstance in respect of modules examined in the current academic year qualify as extenuating circumstances (and is not covered by (e) - (j) below), the candidate **must** be offered the opportunity to be Deemed Not to have Sat (DNS) in those assessments which are assumed, on the basis of evidence, to have been affected by the extenuating circumstances. (This applies equally to students who have met the requirements for a Pass or classified Honours and to those who have not, and equally, in respect of progression decisions, those who have met progression requirements and those who have not.) See paragraphs 43-43 below for the students’ right to choose between a DNS and their underlying result.

- d) **Recommend that a candidate be awarded an Aegrotat degree or other Aegrotat award**, in which case the recommendation is referred to the Programme Examiners for approval. An Aegrotat is a degree awarded when a student is unable to complete the assessment for a programme due to illness or other extenuating circumstances, but where there is sufficient evidence, based on assessments completed and their performance, to provide a high level of assurance that they would otherwise have achieved a degree. (It is normally awarded where there is little possibility of their completing the degree within a reasonable period of time). An Aegrotat is not awarded with an Honours classification.

The award of an Aegrotat will normally have been discussed by the Teaching and Learning Dean, the School Director of Academic Tutoring and the External Examiner in advance of the USCSC. In accordance with (c) above, a student who is deemed eligible for an Aegrotat retains the right to choose between DNS and an Aegrotat.

- e) **Exempt a student from one or more elements of the module assessment**, provided that a mark can be determined from the remaining assessment elements of the module, which, taken together, represent a fair assessment of the module learning outcomes.

*This decision may follow from:*

- (i) *the provision in paragraph 27(j) above, whereby the School Director of Academic Tutoring may refer a case to the USCSC with a recommendation to exempt a student from coursework/in-class tests contributing more than 10% of the module;*

*or*

- (ii) *a recommendation of the School Director of Academic Tutoring to exempt a student from an examination for a module; [Following referral by the School Director of Academic Tutoring **Vary the assessment method for a student for coursework/in-class tests contributing more than 20% of the module** (see paragraph 27(h) above);*

- f) **Approve an extension which extends beyond the student's normal registration period;**
- g) **Permit the Examiners to vary the weighting of the Parts in the calculation of the degree classification.** This would be an exceptional measure, where exceptional circumstances have had a severe and pervasive impact across a Part of the degree. The Examiners, having been permitted by USCSC to vary the weighting, would apply the provision in the event that there was a disparity in performance between the Parts of the degree;
- h) In cases where the student has requested that a decision be made without the circumstances being disclosed to the School Director of Academic Tutoring, make decisions which are available to School Directors of Academic Tutoring under these procedures.

40. In addition, the USCSC may agree that a candidate exceptionally be offered the opportunity to repeat the previous Part or year of study in cases where the candidate's circumstances are so severe that they have not had the benefit of formal tuition during the academic year. In considering this allowance, the panel may have regard to the marks achieved by the student. Where a student is offered the opportunity to repeat the Part, the student should be advised to consult Student Services on the financial implications of repeating a Part. It should be noted that a student who is offered the opportunity to repeat a Part will be

required to submit a statement from a medical professional that they are fit to undertake their studies. If this cannot be provided then the student must suspend until such time when they are fit to resume their studies.

Where a request is time-sensitive and the provision of evidence is unavoidably delayed, a conditional outcome may be agreed by the USCSC without evidence. A deadline will be set for the provision of the evidence (normally 10 days in line with the policy). The Student Support Coordinator or the relevant Programme Administrator in HBS or ISLI will monitor the deadline; the student must alert the Student Support Coordinator or the relevant Programme Administrator in HBS or ISLI if they are unable to meet the deadline, and, where there is good reason, an extension to the deadline will be granted. If no evidence is submitted the provisional outcome will be rescinded and any relevant penalties will be applied. The submitted evidence is assessed by the USCSC and, if the evidence is deemed appropriate, the outcome will be confirmed; if the evidence is not deemed appropriate, the provisional outcome will be rescinded and any relevant penalties will be applied.

41. In those cases where the USCSC has agreed that the student has extenuating circumstances and approved a DNS, the student will be offered a choice. The student may:

- a. Accept one or more of the DNSs offered in relevant modules and take the examinations at the next opportunity without increment of the attempt number. Students who choose this option will not have a Part or final result and will not be able to progress or graduate at this stage; **OR**
- b. Accept the result as agreed provisionally by the relevant Examiners' Meeting, which will be the result calculated on the basis of the marks or an Aegrotat; **OR**
- c. (In those cases, where the exceptional allowance has been agreed) accept the allowance to repeat the Part or Year.

See paragraph 46 below for the timeframe within which students are required to make their decision.

42. **Students are not required to take up a DNS and, if they choose not to, the original mark will normally stand.** Exceptionally, however, in cases where

- a. the student has fulfilled the requirements to progress to the next Part or has met the requirements for at least a classified Honours degree; and
- b. there are exceptional circumstances in which acceptance of a DNS may have a potentially serious impact on the student's health or may jeopardise their completion of the programme,

the student may request the USCSC to consider an alternative remedy to a DNS. Alternative remedies include a variant weighting of Parts in the final degree classification or exemption from one or more assessment elements of a module, subject to the feasibility of deriving a valid module mark from the remaining assessments.

It is anticipated that such cases would relate most commonly, though not exclusively, to cases where acceptance of a DNS, following the August re-assessment period, would entail suspension of registration for a year pending re-assessment. Examples of such exceptional circumstances would include cases where health professionals have advised that a student's health would be adversely affected by a period of suspension or where a scholarship is structured to require completion within the minimum period of registration for the

programme.

A student who wishes to request such allowance should submit their request on an extenuating circumstances form at the same time as they decline the relevant DNSs.

## Process following USCSC

43. Following the decisions of the USCSC, the Support Centre or the relevant Programme Administrator in HBS will e-mail all students whose cases have been considered to inform them of the USCSC's decision, to specify their alternative courses of action, which are indicated above in paragraph 42, and to notify them of their right to appeal against the USCSC's decision.

**44. If a student wishes to appeal against the USCSC's decision, they must do so within five working days from the date on which the e-mail notification of USCSC's decision was issued or, in the case of USCSC decisions notified in the Summer Term, the day following the final day of the relevant exam period. Please see paragraphs 64-75.**

45. Students are notified of the USCSC decision shortly after the meeting of the USCSC and before their underlying result has been determined or notified. Undergraduates who have been offered a DNS may wait until their underlying result has been notified before confirming whether they wish to accept the DNS or accept the underlying result or, where relevant, any other allowance offered. The deadline for responses will be specified annually by the Examinations, Student Records and Graduation Office.

Postgraduate taught students are normally re-assessed within the normal period of their registration and before a final result is available. In consequence, postgraduate taught students are normally required to respond to the offer of a DNS in advance of notification of their underlying result. They are advised to discuss their overall performance with the Programme Director before taking a decision on whether to accept or decline the DNS.

**46. In the case of students who have not responded by the specified date, the following default responses to the offer of DNS will be assumed:**

- a. undergraduates who have passed the Part or Final Examination will be deemed to have declined the offer of a DNS;**
- b. undergraduates with a fail or not qualified overall for the Part or Final Examination will be deemed to have accepted the offer of a DNS.**
- c. postgraduate taught students will be deemed to have accepted the offer of a DNS.**

### *Finalists*

47. The relevant Student Advice and Support Manager or the Teaching and Learning Officer in HBS reports to the Programme Examiners' Meetings on those candidates who have been offered a DNS (or other allowance) and any decisions made by those students to date. For Masters candidates who have not reached the end of their programme, a list of decisions must be sent to the Examinations, Student Records & Graduation Office.

48. Following the Programme Examiners' Meeting, the Support Centre or Teaching and Learning Officer in HBS e-mails students to inform them of the underlying classification of their award and to ask them to decide between the underlying result and the DNS previously offered (or other allowance). Students are required to reply to the Support Centre or Teaching and Learning Officer in HBS by a specified deadline. If a student does not respond by the deadline, the default responses specified in paragraph 47 will be applied. (In the case of a student who has a tuition fee debt of £50 or more, the student will be advised of the underlying result to enable them to consider whether or not to accept the DNS; in the event that they decline the DNS, their result will be No Recommendation until the debt has been reduced below £50.)
49. Where a Finalist who has fulfilled the requirements for a Pass or classified Honours is offered a DNS, they are strongly encouraged to seek advice from the School Director of Academic Tutoring, School or Department Director of Teaching and Learning or other named member of academic staff. (Please see paragraph 43 for provisions which apply when a student declines a DNS.)
50. A student who has been DNSed is allowed to take the relevant assessment again without an increment in the attempt number; in some cases the original mode of assessment may be replaced with a different mode of assessment. If the assessment is an examination, the student will sit the examination in the next examination period. When a student is DNSed, the mark for the relevant assessment component is cancelled and the assessment for the module is incomplete.
51. In the case of Finalist undergraduates and Masters students, if the next examination period falls after the end of their normal period of registration, their registration will be suspended and they will return to the University at the next University examination period for the sole purpose of taking the examinations. Students are informed of this provision in the e-mail advising that they have been offered a DNS.

*Candidates for progression: Parts 1 and 2 (and Part 3 for progression purposes)*

52. The Support Centre or the Teaching and Learning Officer in HBS reports to the relevant University Progression Board on those candidates who have been offered a DNS (or other allowance) and any decisions made by those students to date.
53. Following the meeting of the University Progression Board, the Examinations, Student Records & Graduation Office e-mails students to inform them of their underlying progression result and to ask them to decide between the underlying result and the DNS previously offered (or other allowance). Students are required to reply to the Examinations, Student Records and Graduation Office by a specified deadline.
54. Provisions which apply when a student declines a DNS are set out in paragraph 43.
55. A student who has been DNSed will be allowed to take the assessment again without an increment in the attempt number. If the assessment is an examination, the student will sit the examination in the next examination period. When a student is DNSed in a module, the mark for the relevant assessment component is cancelled and the assessment for the module is incomplete.
56. If the next examination period falls after teaching has commenced on the next Part of study, a student granted DNS must suspend until the next University examination period. Students

are not allowed to progress to the next Part of study until they have completed the assessment for the Part and have met the relevant progression requirements. Students are informed of this provision in the e-mail advising that they have been offered a DNS. A student who has been granted a DNS may proceed to a placement year pending the completion of the assessment for the Part; they will not be permitted to proceed to the next Part of their programme until they have qualified to do so.

*Finalists and candidates for progression: maximum number of DNSs, repeating study and appeals*

57. It should be noted that students can only be granted DNS as the overall result for the Part Examination/Final Examination on two occasions per Part of study. An overall result of DNS is granted for the Part Examination/Final Examination when a student is granted (and, in due course, accepts) DNS in one or more modules (or component thereof) within the Part Examination/Final Examination.
58. In exceptional cases, USCSC can determine that the student's circumstances are severe enough to determine that they have not had the benefit of formal tuition and therefore can be allowed to repeat the previous Part of study. It should be noted that, where a student is offered the opportunity to repeat the Part, the student will be required to submit a statement from a medical professional that they are fit to undertake their studies. If this cannot be provided then the student must suspend until such time that they are fit to resume their studies.
59. If a student wishes to appeal a USCSC decision they should submit a completed 'Appeal of an extenuating circumstances decision' form to the Student Appeals and Academic Misconduct Officer [[ecfappeals@reading.ac.uk](mailto:ecfappeals@reading.ac.uk)] for consideration by the Extenuating Circumstances Appeals Board (ECAB). The procedure detailed in paragraph 66 should be followed.

## Decisions following diagnosis of disability during a student's programme of study

60. In cases where a student has been diagnosed with a disability during their programme of study, the School Director of Academic Tutoring, in consultation with Disability Advisory Services (DAS), is responsible for applying the policy on retrospective consideration of disability, which can be found at <https://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/student/exa-RetroAllowance.aspx>. The School Director of Academic Tutoring will refer to USCSC complex cases and those requiring the exercise of powers which are assigned to USCSC.
61. In the event that a student submits an extenuating circumstances request due to a worsening of a condition disclosed to DAS, confirmation from a member of DAS staff may be accepted as an alternative to new medical evidence.

## Support services available to students

62. If appropriate, students should be encouraged to consult relevant support services. These support services may include Counselling, the Disability Advisory Service, the University Study Advisers and the Advisory Service at RUSU. Students may also be encouraged to consult a medical practitioner.

63. For details of the entitlement of suspended students to access support services, please refer to the *Policy on and procedures for suspensions* ([www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/suspensions.pdf](http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/suspensions.pdf)).

## Appeals – Extenuating Circumstances Appeal Board

64. The Extenuating Circumstances (EC) Appeal Board will consider appeals of decisions made under the extenuating circumstances procedure by the School Director of Academic Tutoring or the University Standing Committee on Special Cases (USCSC), except in the circumstance specified in (66) below.
65. Where, following the notification of an overall result for a Final or Part Examination, a student wishes to appeal against their overall result on a *combination* of (a) permissible grounds for an appeal to the Senate Standing Committee on Examination Results *and* (b) permissible grounds for an appeal against a decision taken under the extenuating circumstances procedures, the appeal will be considered under the procedures of the Senate Standing Committee on Examination Results.
66. The permissible grounds for an appeal are against a decision taken under the extenuating circumstances procedures:
- a. The procedures for considering an extenuating circumstances request were not properly followed;
  - b. The decision reached, or the outcome, was unreasonable;
  - c. The request was not properly considered, for example, relevant information included by the student was overlooked
  - d. The student was not given reasons for the SDAT/USCSC's decision
  - e. There is new material evidence which the student, for good reason, was unable to submit earlier in the process;
  - f. There was a reasonable perception of bias during the consideration of, and/or decision on, the request.
67. If the student chooses to appeal a decision that has been agreed by the School Director of Academic Tutoring or by the USCSC, he or she must complete the form 'Appeal of an extenuating circumstances decision' (available [here](#)), setting out clearly the grounds for appeal, providing reasons and details of supporting evidence. The completed form must be e-mailed to the Student Appeals and Academic Misconduct Officer [[ecfappeals@reading.ac.uk](mailto:ecfappeals@reading.ac.uk)] within five working days of the date on which notification of the decision of the School Senior Director of Academic Tutoring or USCSC was issued.
68. The EC Appeal Board will not re-investigate or re-hear the case. Rather, it will consider the grounds for appeal and whether there has been any failure of procedure and whether the decision reached was fair and reasonable in all of the circumstances.
69. The Board will have the power to:
- a. Confirm the decision which has been made  
OR
  - b. Alter the decision which has been made, and determine such outcomes as, acting reasonably, it considers appropriate without referring the matter back to the USCSC or the SDAT.

70. Appeals shall be considered by a panel of the Board.
71. Panels of the Board will comprise: one Teaching and Learning Dean, one School Director of Academic Tutoring, one RUSU officer and a Secretary (to be appointed by the Head of Governance). Panels of the Board will have a rolling membership (i.e. any post-holder for the designated roles can serve on a panel). The panel shall not include any member who has had any previous involvement in an extenuating circumstances case to be heard by the panel. An appropriate member of the Support Centres may be invited by the Chair to attend consideration of a case to advise the panel on matters of fact.
72. On receipt of the appeal statement, the Secretary will normally request a written response to the student's statement of appeal from, as appropriate, the School Director of Academic Tutoring or the chair of the USCSC meeting at which the case was considered, except where the appeal relates only to an administrative error, the late submission of a case, and/or late submission of evidence, in which case a written response is not required.
73. The panel will receive a copy of the appeal file in advance of the meeting. This will normally contain the following:
- the student's appeal statement;
  - any evidence submitted by the student in support of his or her appeal;
  - a written response to the student's appeal statement as described in paragraph 73 above;
  - a copy of all documents considered by the School Director of Academic Tutoring or the USCSC;
  - a copy of the procedures that have been applied;
  - any other relevant documents pertinent to the appeal
74. The panel will normally meet, either in person or via conference call or equivalent, to consider the case and the written documentation. In special circumstances, it may be deemed necessary to consider the case via email. Where this is proposed the student will be notified in advance, including being provided with the reasons for this, and will have the opportunity to provide written responses and submissions.
75. The outcome of the appeal will normally be issued to the student within five working days of the appeal decision being made. The Secretary will send the outcome letter and any relevant documentation to the student via their university email account.
76. The appeal to the EC Appeal Board normally concludes the University's procedures, and where appropriate will result in the issue of a Completion of Procedures Letter. If the student remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the procedures the student may submit a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) providing that the complaint is eligible under the OIA rules. Students who wish to do so must submit a complaint to the OIA within twelve months of the date of the University's Completion of Procedures letter.

## Monitoring

77. The Centre for Quality Support and Development will annually produce a report to

monitor USCSC decisions in respect of extenuating circumstances.

78. As part of an External Examiner's broad oversight of the assessment process and its fairness, an External Examiner may, on request and on a confidential basis, have sight of extenuating circumstances forms and/or be provided with a brief synopsis of selected cases, and offer comment on the University's procedures and decision-making in respect of extenuating circumstances cases.

See Code of Practice on the External Examining of Taught Programmes, section 11, for further information.

Version	Keeper	Reviewed	Approved by	Approval date	Effective date
1	CQSD	Annually	UBTL	11 July 2017	Autumn Term 2017
2			UBTL	15 May 2018	immediately
3			UBTL	10 July 2018	2018/19
4			UBTLSE	9 July 2019	immediately
			UBTLSE	2 December 2019	immediately
			UBTLSE	15 September 2020	Immediately

## Guide to policy and procedures for teaching and learning



### Section 6: Programme-related matters

## Annex 1: Further information on evidence required to support extenuating circumstances

1. Where a student encounters unforeseen circumstances which are beyond the student's control and have negatively impacted on their performance, they must notify the University of their circumstances via the *Extenuating Circumstances* form.
2. All forms (with the exception of self-certified extensions, which are only available to post-experience postgraduate programmes in Henley Business School) must be accompanied by corroborating evidence and the evidence must be provided in English. Where the original document is in another language, then the student may provide a certified translation (at their own expense). Alternatively, the student can submit the original document, with their own translation, on the understanding that the University will then get it checked.
3. The nature of the evidence required includes:
  - a) For bereavement, a death certificate or a signed and dated letter from a minister of religion, medical practitioner, police officer, solicitor, magistrate or other officer of the law or a person with equivalent professional standing, or an order of service;
  - b) For illness, a signed and dated letter from a medical practitioner (GP, clinical specialist, or registered professional in psychiatric practice) that states the dates when the illness affected the student and how, without breaching confidence, the circumstances affected or are likely to affect the student's ability to prepare for an assessment, submit or attend for an assessment or recognise and deal with their circumstances;
  - c) For a student awaiting a diagnosis of an illness or condition, a signed and dated letter from a medical practitioner that states the dates when the student attended for treatment, when tests were undertaken, and when a diagnosis is expected;
  - d) For accident or injury, a copy of an accident report provided by a police officer, Magistrate, or Magistrate's Clerk; or a signed and dated letter from a medical practitioner. In all cases where a letter is provided it must state the dates when the

accident or injury occurred, how the student was affected, the position and qualification(s) of the person providing the letter and their contact details;

- e) For significant adverse personal or family circumstances encountered by a student, a signed and dated letter from one or more of the following: a medical practitioner, a social worker (stating their position with respect to the student), a registered psychological therapist, a registered professional in psychiatric practice, an officer of the law, or a minister of religion. The letter must provide the signatory's position and qualification(s) and their contact details and must provide information on the time when the circumstances occurred, whether they are continuing and an opinion on the severity and effect the circumstances are having on the student;
  - f) For students who are members of sports teams, or other equivalent activities, at the national or international level, a letter must be provided from the supporting sports/organising body indicating the dates when the student is required for training, competitions and/or attendance;
  - g) For students who are attending a job interview, a copy of the invitation to interview;
  - h) For part-time and distance learning students in full-time employment only, who have experienced an increase in their workload due to circumstances beyond their control, or have been required by their employer or a client to work through normal periods available for study and/or assessment:
    - i. Where they are in employment, a signed and dated letter from their employer, or their employer's authorised representative, stating that the student has been required by them to undertake work in the interests of the employer and that this was in time that had previously been agreed would be available to the student to study, prepare for assessment or take an assessment;
    - ii. Where they are self-employed, evidence from their client or the client's authorised representative stating that they have required the student to undertake unforeseen work that was necessary in the interests of the client's business, together with the dates and times when the student had been required to attend the client or undertake the previously unforeseen work;
    - iii. For military service, the individual's call-up papers (translated where necessary) together with evidence to show that the service cannot be deferred.
4. A list of circumstances which the University does not consider extenuating circumstances is given in paragraph 10 (above).