Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure

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Policy owners	Head of Student Services
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Lead Contact	Maheen Javed M.Javed@sirm.ac.uk
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Other relevant / applicable legislation/requirements	Equality Act 2010; Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR; UK Quality Code for Higher Education (QAA); OIA Good Practice Framework

Document control

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SIRM College

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1. Aim

SIRM College recognises that students may experience serious, exceptional, unforeseen or unavoidable circumstances that adversely affect their ability to prepare for, complete, submit, or attend assessment. This policy sets out the principles and procedures by which students may request consideration of extenuating circumstances so that academic decisions fairly reflect their true level of achievement.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that:

- students are treated fairly, consistently and compassionately
- academic standards are maintained
- reasonable academic adjustments can be made where justified
- Senate receives clear recommendations

This policy fulfils the College's approach to the consideration of mitigating circumstances (often referred to as "special consideration") in assessment.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all students enrolled on SIRM College higher education provision. It covers circumstances that have had an adverse impact on a student's ability to undertake, complete or perform in any form of assessed work, including examinations, coursework, presentations, vivas, placements and practical assessments.

3. Associated regulations and policies

This policy should be read alongside the following SIRM College documents:

- Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure
- Assessment Policy
- Support Through Studies Policy and Procedure
- Non-Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure
- Data Protection Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Terms and Conditions (student contract)

4. Principles

Extenuating circumstances are circumstances beyond the student's reasonable control that have had a demonstrable negative impact on academic performance, attendance at assessment, or timely submission. The focus is on the impact on assessment, not simply the seriousness of the event itself. Extenuating circumstances do not result in additional marks

being awarded. Instead, the College may apply proportionate academic measures to ensure that the final outcome accurately reflects the student's achievement.

Any action taken must preserve the learning outcomes, threshold academic standards, fairness to all students, and any professional, statutory or awarding body requirements. Students should normally disclose circumstances as early as possible so that supportive interventions can be arranged. The Extenuating Circumstances Panel will consider the impact of the circumstances on academic performance rather than the seriousness of the personal circumstances alone.

Extenuating circumstances are distinct from ongoing support arrangements and reasonable adjustments.

This policy applies to short-term, unforeseen and exceptional circumstances that temporarily impact a student's ability to undertake assessment. It is not intended to support ongoing health conditions, disabilities, or long-term support needs, which are managed through the Support Through Studies Policy and associated support plans.

Students with ongoing conditions or repeated impact on their studies will normally be supported through Support Through Studies processes, and not solely through repeated extenuating circumstances applications.

5. Eligibility

5.1 Circumstances normally considered

The following are examples of circumstances that may be considered, but this list is not exhaustive:

- serious illness or injury
- hospitalisation
- acute deterioration of an existing health condition
- receiving a diagnosis of a significant health condition
- bereavement of a close family member or significant person
- severe family or personal crisis
- being a victim of crime
- significant caring responsibilities arising unexpectedly
- serious mental health episode
- major unforeseen domestic disruption
- other exceptional circumstances that the College accepts would have a substantive impact on a student's studies
- acute or significant exacerbation of a pre-existing health condition where the impact is temporary and not already mitigated through an existing support plan

5.2 Circumstances not normally accepted

The following would not normally be accepted as grounds for an extenuating circumstances claim unless accompanied by exceptional justification:

- poor time management
- pressure of multiple deadlines
- minor illness not affecting performance materially
- usual employment commitments
- transport delays where alternative arrangements were possible
- IT failure due to lack of backup
- holidays or personal travel
- financial pressures that are ongoing and foreseeable

5.3 Grounds for application

Students may apply where circumstances have:

- prevented submission
- caused late submission
- prevented attendance at an examination, presentation or viva
- significantly impaired performance
- prevented participation in placement or practical assessment

6. In-year applications

6.1 Extensions

Students may request an extension where circumstances affect their ability to meet a deadline. Requests should normally be submitted before the assessment deadline using the College's Extenuating Circumstances Request Form. Where this is not possible, requests should normally be submitted within 5 working days of the assessment date or missed deadline. Requests received after this period will not normally be considered, and the student will have recourse to the Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure once the assessment result or results have been formally confirmed and published.

The relevant Programme Lead or nominee may approve short extensions where learning outcomes remain assessable, internal moderation timelines are not compromised, and the extension is in the student's best interests. Extensions may also apply to reassessment deadlines.

6.2 Alternative assessments and adjustments

Where appropriate, students may be offered revised assessment dates, deferred practical activity, alternative mode of assessment, remote participation arrangements, or arrangements consistent with any approved

plans. Students with declared disabilities or ongoing support needs will normally be referred into the Support Through Studies procedures and should work in partnership with Student Support Services and academic staff to collaboratively manage their studies.

Where a student discloses an ongoing condition, or where there is evidence of repeated or sustained impact on academic engagement or performance, the College will refer the student to the Support Through Studies Policy and procedures.

In such cases, extenuating circumstances will not normally be used as the sole mechanism of support, and a coordinated support approach will be implemented.

7. Reassessment and uncapped resits

Where extenuating circumstances have materially affected an assessment attempt, the Extenuating Circumstances Panel may approve an uncapped resit or deferred first attempt under delegated academic authority (on behalf of Senate). Where a student is unable to attempt reassessment in the normal period, a later valid opportunity may be arranged.

8. End-of-year applications

Students whose performance, progression or award classification may have been affected should submit a formal extenuating circumstances claim before the relevant Extenuating Circumstances Panel or assessment deadline as published by the College

Late claims will only be considered where the student can demonstrate valid reasons why earlier disclosure was not reasonably possible. The College may also consider claims initiated through Student Support referral, safeguarding or welfare escalation, or evidence received after serious incidents.

9. Extenuating Circumstances Panel

9.1 Purpose

The Extenuating Circumstances Panel acts on delegated authority from Senate and is responsible for reviewing all formal claims, determining whether claims are upheld, and making decisions regarding appropriate academic outcomes.

9.2 Membership

The Panel operates under delegated academic authority from the Principal (on behalf of Senate). The Panel will normally include a senior academic lead eg. Head of Quality (Chair), acting under delegated academic authority from the Principal. Programme Lead (or nominee from the relevant area, not directly responsible for the student where possible) Head of Student Services, a Compliance representative, a Student Support representative, and additional academic specialists where the nature of the claim requires it. The Panel may include independent or external academic advisers where additional expertise or assurance is required.

The Panel must include at least one senior academic representative and one student support representative to be quorate. The Principal may review or intervene in decisions in exceptional circumstances where institutional risk or academic standards require this.

9.3 Responsibilities

The Panel will review all submitted evidence, determine whether the claim is upheld, assess the impact on academic performance, determine proportionate outcomes, and ensure that academic standards are preserved.

The Panel will also consider patterns of repeated applications or recurring issues, and where appropriate will recommend referral into Support Through Studies to ensure appropriate ongoing support.

9.4 Possible outcomes

Possible outcomes determined by the Panel include:

- extension approval
- removal of late penalties
- deferred assessment
- uncapped resit
- first sit as if for the first time
- disregard of an affected attempt where academic regulations permit
- deferral of a progression decision
- flagging for classification review
- temporary interruption or break in studies
- repeat attendance where permitted by academic regulations
- referral to the Support Through Studies procedure or other support pathways
- no action where evidence is insufficient

9.5 Communication

Students will receive written confirmation of the outcome and rationale within 5 working days of the Panel meeting.

9.6 Repeat Applications and Escalation

Where a student submits multiple extenuating circumstances applications within a defined period, or where applications indicate a recurring or underlying issue, the College may review the appropriateness of continued reliance on this policy.

Where a student does not engage with Support Through Studies processes, the Panel may take this into account when determining the appropriateness of further extenuating circumstances applications.

In such cases, the student will normally be referred to Support Through Studies to ensure that appropriate and sustained support is put in place.

10. Supporting evidence

10.1 Evidence requirement

Students should provide evidence wherever reasonably possible. The absence of evidence will not automatically invalidate a claim but may affect the Panel's ability to make a recommendation.

10.2 Acceptable evidence

Examples of acceptable evidence include: GP or hospital letters; counsellor or wellbeing professional statement; death certificate or funeral notice; police or crime reference; employer confirmation; support worker statement; and official legal or court documentation.

10.3 Self-certification

Students may self-certify for short periods of illness or acute disruption of up to 7 calendar days, normally once per academic year. Self-certification does not guarantee that a claim will be upheld; the Panel retains discretion to request further evidence where it considers this necessary.

10.4 Language and authenticity

All evidence must be in English or accompanied by a certified translation at the student's expense.

10.5 Fraudulent evidence

Submission of false or altered evidence will be referred under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure. Where falsified evidence is suspected, consideration of the claim may be paused pending investigation.

11. Appeals

Students may appeal decisions arising from extenuating circumstances only through the Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure, on the following permitted grounds: procedural irregularity; new material evidence that was not reasonably available at the time of the original decision; or unreasonable decision-making. Dissatisfaction with academic judgment alone is not valid grounds for appeal.

12. Records, confidentiality and monitoring

All claims, evidence and outcomes will be treated as confidential personal data and managed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, UK GDPR and SIRM College's Data Protection Policy. Only staff with legitimate academic or welfare responsibilities in relation to a given case may access records.

The Head of Quality will maintain a secure register of all applications, decisions, trends, repeat cases and equality impact themes. Annual thematic reporting will be presented to Senate to support quality enhancement, student success and wellbeing strategy. Reporting will normally be anonymised and will include trend analysis by programme, protected characteristics, timing and assessment type to identify potential barriers to student success.

The monitoring process will include identification of repeat applications, patterns of impact, and potential indicators of underlying support needs.

Where appropriate, anonymised trend data and case insights will be shared with Student Support Services to inform Support Through Studies interventions and institutional support strategies.