



UNIVERSITY SECRETARIAT

# EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES ACADEMIC POLICY

Approved by Academic Council on 10 December 2009

Last updated: 27 April 2017

<b>Policy Title</b>	Extenuating Circumstances
<b>Policy Officer</b>	Jean Keating, University Secretariat
<b>Date Approved</b>	10 December 2009
<b>Date Effective From</b>	September 2010
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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Students are expected to meet the academic demands of their chosen programme. However, they may experience a range of serious and unanticipated difficulties, which adversely affect their ability to study, complete assessments or attend their required classes and other learning activities.
- 1.2 Boards of Examiners can consider such circumstances in reaching decisions about a student's academic performance subject to the impact of those circumstances being described and appropriately verified. To support Boards of Examiners in fulfilling this responsibility requires the definition of appropriate policy and procedure in respect of extenuating circumstances.

## 2. Context

- 2.2 All students need to be treated equitably as part of the assessment process. To assist Boards in their decision-making process, it is necessary to have an appropriate evidence base to inform the judgements which can be made. This paper sets out the definition of extenuating circumstances, policy principles for extenuating circumstances and provides a suggested format and process for the consideration of these circumstances. The process is aligned with the current responsibilities of Boards of Examiners and the Assessment Appeals procedure.

## 3. Definition of Extenuating Circumstances

- 3.1 The definition of extenuating circumstances is the occurrence of unforeseen events which have prevented a student from attending a substantial number of classes, affected their ability to study or complete assessments (both continuous assessment and/or examinations), resulted in assessment deadlines being missed or adversely affected performance in any assessments undertaken.
- 3.2 Such circumstances include serious illness, hospitalisation, accident, family bereavement or other serious personal or emotional circumstances.
- 3.3 Extenuating circumstances do not cover events which are foreseen, e.g. sporting or cultural commitments. Where appropriate, the student should follow procedures under the Policy on Late Submission of Coursework.

## 4. Key Principles

The policy and process for extenuating circumstances is based on the following principles:

- 4.1 This policy is to be applied to students enrolled on a programme leading to a recognised award.
- 4.2 All students must be treated equitably.



- 4.3 All information provided in relation to extenuating circumstances will be treated in strictest confidence and such information will be limited to the personnel directly involved in administering and evaluating the circumstances.
- 4.4 The application should be dealt with as quickly and as locally as possible. To expedite the processing of applications during a semester, a Board of Examiners may delegate authority to a sub-committee or standing committee of its members.
- 4.5 Applications for extenuating circumstances must be made as close as possible to the assessment(s) affected and within the timeframe set for applications. Retrospective applications may be considered only in exceptional cases where there are valid reasons for non-submission within the usual timeframe.
- 4.6 The University reserves the right to investigate the validity of applications. In cases where there is a suspicion that an application may have been submitted fraudulently, the issue may be referred to the University's disciplinary process.
- 4.7 The decision on the impact of the extenuating circumstances on the student's performance is a matter of academic judgement on the part of the Board of Examiners.
- 4.8 The decision taken by the Board of Examiners is final. A student may only appeal a decision through the UCD Assessment Appeals route if
- i. There were extenuating circumstances of which the Programme Board was aware but had rejected because the application was late and the Programme Board did not consider the reason why the application was late to be valid.
  - ii. A prior circumstance emerged of which the Programme Board was not aware.

## 5. Process

- 5.1 Students are required to make a formal statement of circumstances which have affected them, outline the impact of these circumstances and support this statement with appropriate written verification.
- 5.2 This verification must comprise a statement from an appropriate professional or other recognised person verifying the circumstances described in the application and indicating their impact on the student's ability to meet the demands of the programme.
- 5.3 Following the submission of an application to the appropriate Office, it is processed in accordance with the procedures set out below.
- 5.4 All decisions are ratified at a meeting of the Board of Examiners.

## 6. Supporting Documentation

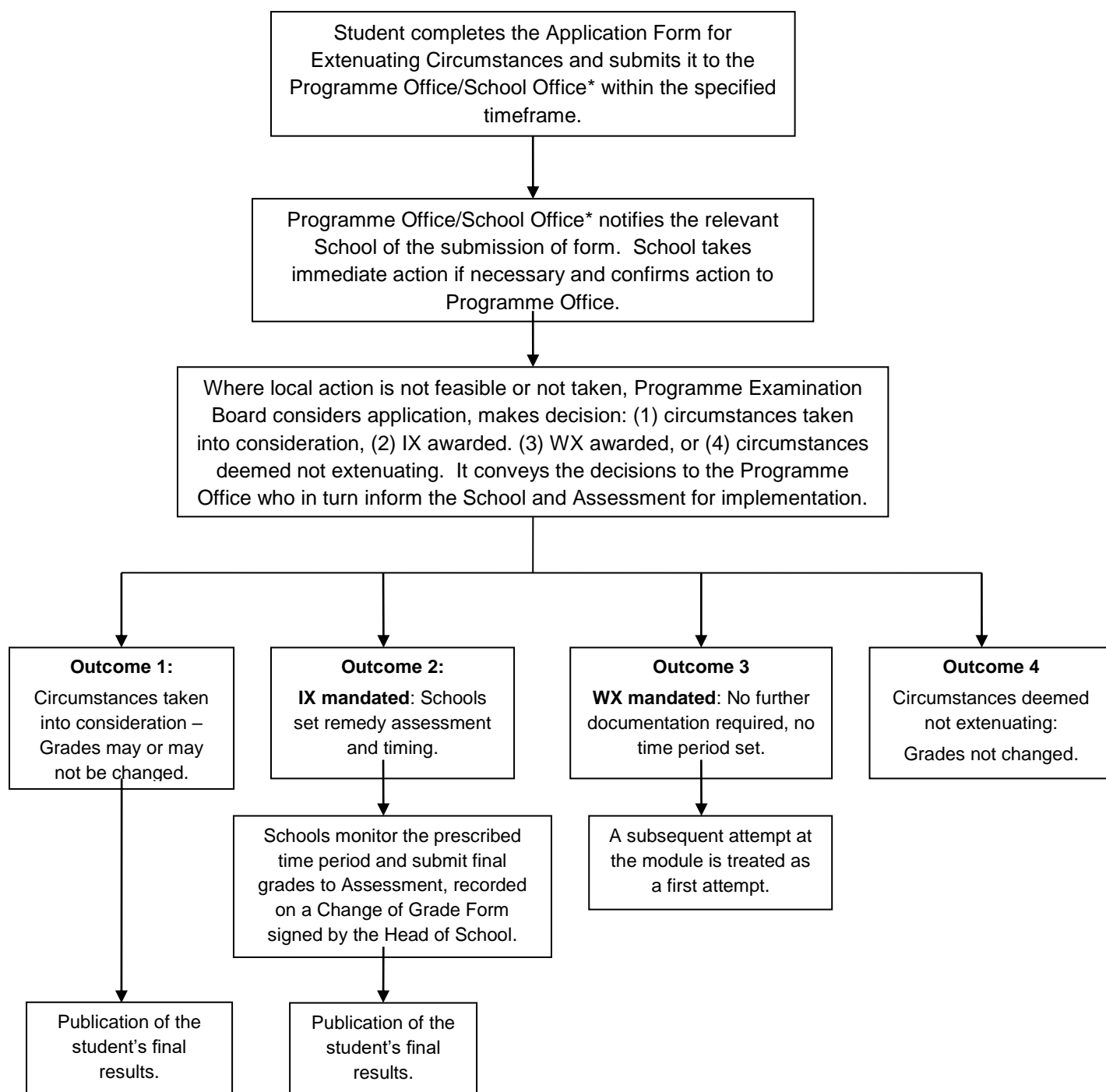
- Application Form for Extenuating Circumstances
- Staff Guide to the Policy on Extenuating Circumstances
- Student Guide to the Policy on Extenuating Circumstances



## **Process for Dealing with Applications for Extenuating Circumstances**

Procedures for dealing with applications may vary from Programme Board to Programme Board, depending on numbers received and issues that may be unique to a particular programme. The following procedure should broadly apply across the University:





\*Applications from undergraduate students must be submitted to the relevant Programme Office. Applications from graduate students must be submitted to the relevant School Office or Programme Office as appropriate.

## Tracking Information

### Personnel

Role	Name	Programme/School/Unit	e-mail
Policy Working Group	Prof. Suzanne Quin (Chair)	Dean of Social Science	<a href="mailto:Suzanne.quin@ucd.ie">Suzanne.quin@ucd.ie</a>



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### Version History

Version	Date	Summary of Changes	Changed by
1.6	13 April 05	Existing Policy on Extenuating Circumstances prior to initial comments from Working Group	
2.1	18 Aug 09	Reference to sporting/cultural commitments added as recommended by Working Group	Jean Keating
2.2	3 Sept 09	Additional amendments and substantial structural changes following meeting of Working Group 31.08.09 and extensive consultation with stakeholders	Jean Keating
2.3	23 Sept 09	Additional amendments and comments received from Working Group prior to meeting of Working Group 29.09.09	Jean Keating
2.4	18 Nov 09	Minor changes made following University Boards	Jean Keating
2.5	27 Apr 17	Amendment to reflect stipulations of Assessment Appeals policy	Barry Shanahan

### Consultation and Approvals Plan

Committee/Group	Date		Version	Action Sought	Decision
	Meeting	Circulation			
Working Group Meeting	16 June 09	11 June 09	1.6	Comment and discussion	Changes recommended
Working Group Meeting	31 Aug 09	18 Aug 09	2.1	Comment and discussion	Changes recommended
Working Group Meeting	29 Sept 09	23 Sept 09	2.3	Comment and discussion	Changes recommended
UUPB/UGPB	11 & 12 Nov 09	5 Nov 09	2.4	Comment and discussion	One change made
WG met with SU	25 Nov 09	18 Nov 09	2.4	Comment and discussion	Change made to Student Guide
Academic Council	10 Dec 09	3 Dec 09	2.4	Approved	Approved
Academic Council	27 Apr 17	20 Apr 17	2.5	Approved	Approved

