



UCL Academic Manual

Chapter 4: Assessment Framework for Taught Programmes

Annex 4.2.2

Extenuating Circumstances Guidance Notes

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Guidance

1 About

1. The following guidance notes are provided to support staff in the implementation of the new UCL Extenuating Circumstances (EC) regulations for 2015-16 onwards. If, after reading the regulations and guidance notes, you have any queries about the new system, please contact Academic Services.
2. The revised regulations are based on principles considered to be best practice by the Academic Registrars' Council, the Office of the Independent Adjudicator and the UK Quality Assurance Agency. The regulations are designed to provide students with greater levels of support at the time of the Extenuating Circumstance, and to mirror the principles applied for employees, fostering a professional approach which prepares students for the work place and highlighting the need for students to accept responsibility for their own conduct.
3. The regulations aim to ensure that the academic standards of UCL are upheld, and that all classifications are based on actual performance and not on speculation about under-performance (in other words, neither UCL nor the student has any objective or quantifiable evidence of the extent to which the student's adverse circumstances may or may not have materially affected the mark obtained). Instead, UCL aims to support students through any difficulties that they may be experiencing and provide alternative options for students who are unable to sit an assessment, such as an extension, deferral of assessment to a later date, or special assessment arrangements (e.g. extra time in a written exam).
4. Under these principles, students are expected to raise any issues before or at the time of the assessment, so that appropriate measures can be put in place to support them.

2 Scope

1. The new regulations apply from the start of the 2015/16 session to all taught students in all faculties, with the exception of the UCL Institute of Education and the UCL School of Pharmacy where derogations have been approved for 2015-16. Applications for further derogation in subsequent years must be made to UCL Education Committee.
2. Students with Extenuating Circumstances 'banked' and graded from previous years will still have these circumstances taken into consideration by the Board of Examiners at the point of classification. The 2014-15 regulations on EC grading and classification adjustments will apply to these students only. Any new claims made by such students will only be considered under the 2015-16 regulations i.e. no further ECs can be 'banked' or graded for any student.
3. The regulations do not apply to formative assessment or compulsory attendance requirements. These should be dealt with by the Department (etc.).

3 Faculty and Departmental EC Panels

1. Each Faculty will establish a Faculty Extenuating Circumstances Panel (FECF) which has the authority to make decisions on all EC claims submitted by students in the Faculty, on behalf of Academic Board. FECF meetings replace the previous system of Board of Examiners EC pre-meetings.
2. To help with the volume of claims, FECFs may delegate authority to a Departmental EC Panel (DECF). Here it is assumed that 'Department' also covers local variations like division, school, institute etc.
3. Each FECF is responsible for determining which decisions and processes may be delegated to a departmental panel acting on its behalf.
4. Each Faculty is responsible for publishing the arrangements in place within the Faculty, and ensuring that the contact details of the relevant FECF/ DECF Secretaries are readily available to staff in other Faculties.
5. The regulations allow FECFs and DECFs to 'meet' virtually to expedite decision-making.
6. Each Faculty should determine how frequently the FECF/ DECF needs to meet. It is likely that more cases will need to be considered around the main examination periods, and meetings (actual or virtual) should be scheduled accordingly. The FECF/ DECF should take place sufficiently after the last assessment to allow students, staff and Assessment and Student Records time to submit information, but also before the main Programme Boards of Examiners meetings commence.
7. The FECF/ DECF should aim to be as independent and objective as possible to promote fairness and consistency for all students, and to prevent staff from making any representations on a particular student's behalf. It is recognised that the levels of staffing in some departments/ faculties will mean that some panels need to include Programme Directors etc. However, no member of staff should be involved in the decisions for students that are personally known to them (e.g. a tutee, supervisee, or any student whose work will be marked or moderated by the member of staff). This does not mean that the member of staff must leave the room, but they should not comment or vote on the decision for that student, or make representations on that student's behalf.
8. External Examiners should not be invited to attend FECF/ DECF meetings.

4 Responsibility for Processing EC Claims

1. Each student's 'home' Faculty is responsible for processing any EC Claims submitted by that student.
2. Where the student is registered on a combined honours or joint degree, one of the Faculties will be specified as the home Faculty, which will be responsible for processing EC Claim.
3. Where a student submits an EC Claim relating to a module organised by another Faculty, the FECP Secretary should ensure that the decisions of the home FECP are communicated to the correct Programme Board of Examiners. If the correct Programme Board of Examiners is unclear, the Secretary should contact the relevant FECP for advice.
4. Where the EC Claim states that the student is seeking a coursework deadline extension of up to one week, the receiving office should forward the claim to the relevant Programme Director (or equivalent), Departmental Tutor or Chair of the Programme Board of Examiners no later than one week after receipt of the claim, or as soon as possible if the deadline in question is imminent. If the correct recipient is unclear, the receiving office should contact the Secretary of the relevant FECP for advice.

5 Acceptable Grounds for ECs

1. The list of acceptable grounds is provided as a guide to what UCL would normally expect to be acceptable grounds for a claim, based on sector best practice. The examples are designed to ensure that, as far as possible, all students in all faculties are treated equally and fairly, and that only circumstances which are 'sudden, unexpected and beyond the student's control' are considered. The Faculty EC Panel will however need to use its academic judgement to assess each claim on an individual basis.
2. EC Claims relating to long-term or chronic conditions or disabilities will not be considered under the EC regulations. Such students should instead apply for Special Assessment Arrangements using the normal procedures. The EC Claim process does however recognise that such students might experience an acute episode or sudden worsening of their condition, or that a condition might be newly-diagnosed and therefore 'sudden, unexpected and beyond the student's control'. Such students are encouraged to seek support through the Special Assessment Arrangements provisions, but may need to submit an EC Claim if, for example, there is insufficient time to put Special Assessment Arrangements in place.
3. The lists provided are non-exhaustive and an EC Panel will need to exercise academic judgement in those cases which are not covered by the regulations, or where culturally-sensitive issues need to be taken into account.

6 Submission of EC Claims

1. Under the principle of addressing ECs at the time of the problem, students must submit their EC Claim at the time of the circumstance and not more than one week after the assessment deadline/examination date. The regulations recognise that a student might not be able to meet this deadline due to the nature or severity of the EC. In such cases, staff and students should follow the regulations outlined in Section 4.3 Late Submission of a Claim.

2. If a student is unable to obtain evidence in order to submit their EC Claim within the one week deadline, the student should submit their claim on time, indicating on the form that evidence is to follow. The FECP/ DECP should wait until appropriate evidence has been provided before making a decision.
3. The regulations allow each Faculty to decide where EC claims should be submitted. Students should be given clear instructions about the procedure for making EC Claims (e.g. in the Student Handbook or in a prominent location on Moodle), in advance of the examination period or assessment deadline and preferably at the start of the academic year. This should include advice about the form to be filled in, the supporting documentation required, the deadline for submission and the procedure for consideration of submissions. In addition, it is good practice to send a reminder email about the procedure to all students at key times of the year when assessments and/or examinations are due to take place.

7 Submitting a Claim on a Student's Behalf

1. Students are responsible for making known any circumstances which might have an impact on their performance at assessment. Where a student is severely affected by their condition, or having difficulties with the EC claim process, a tutor or other member of staff may assist the student in completing their claim, or may refer the student to Student Support and Wellbeing or Student and Registry Services for assistance. In extremis, a next of kin would be able to submit an EC Claim for the student. However it is not appropriate for a tutor or any other member of staff to submit an EC Claim on a student's behalf as this unfairly advantages some students over others.

8 Evidence

1. Self-certification will not be accepted. If a student requires evidence for a short-term medical condition, they may be referred to the Gower Place Practice.
2. If the FECP/ DECP is unsure about the nature or severity of any medical condition, Student Support and Wellbeing can offer generic advice but cannot discuss named individuals.

9 Extensions of up to 1 Week

1. The regulations allow the Programme Director, Departmental Tutor or Chair of a Programme Board of Examiners to grant an extension of up to one week. Module tutors/ organisers etc. should not accept requests from students and should instead ensure that all requests from students are submitted via the EC Claim Form to the appropriate office detailed in the Student Handbook. This ensures that all claims are treated equally, that all extensions are granted on the basis of evidenced Extenuating Circumstances, and that no student is advantaged or disadvantaged over others.
2. In the majority of cases, it is expected that a week's extension will allow the student to complete an assessment. To ensure that longer extensions are only applied when necessary, all other requests must be considered by the FECP/ DECP.
3. Where a longer extension is needed, staff and students should consider whether the student ought to interrupt their studies.

10 EC Panel Decision

1. The Faculty/ Departmental EC Panel will make its decision without knowledge of the marks for the modules concerned. The EC Claim Form asks the student how the EC has affected their performance at assessment e.g. do they need an extension, deferral or special assessment arrangements; did they hand something in late; are they at risk of failing a module. The EC Panel should base its decision on the information provided by the student. However, in some cases it may be necessary to verify information with the Department/ Division e.g. whether the student has missed a deadline.
2. The EC Claim Form asks students to identify clearly the modules and components for which they are claiming mitigation, including the module codes. It should not be assumed that performance in any other assessment has been affected by the EC. If the form suggests that the student is making a claim for a long-term, chronic condition or disability, the EC Panel should only consider the impact of any acute episodes on the modules/ components specified by the student on the EC Claim Form. Long-term approaches to supporting such students must be considered under the Special Assessment Arrangements provisions and not the EC Regulations.
3. It is expected that, in the majority of cases, mitigation can and should be agreed before the student sits the assessment.
4. The preferred outcome of an Extenuating Circumstances Claim is for the student to be supported in taking the assessment at the normal time, or to defer the assessment to a later date, in the form of an extension, deferred resit/ resubmission or condoned late submission (i.e. a retrospectively-approved extension):
 - i. To refer the claim to the Special Assessment Arrangements Panel:
 - Students with disabilities or long-term medical conditions should apply for Special Assessment Arrangements via Student Disability Services using the normal procedures. The new policy simply provides an additional mechanism for EC Panels to refer cases to the Special Assessment Arrangements Panel where a student has short-term, unforeseen Extenuating Circumstances which could be mitigated by putting Special Assessment Arrangements in place.
 - The procedures also allow for a student to be ill on the day of the assessment/ exam; Assessment and Student Records or Student Support and Wellbeing may assist the student in submitting an EC Claim and in putting Special Assessment Arrangements in place.
 - ii. To offer the student the opportunity to resit/ resubmit the assessment as if for the first time and without penalty (deferral):
 - Where a deferral is recommended, the FECP/ DECP will need to determine when the reassessment should take place, based on the student's circumstances. The Panel may recommend that the student resits with or without attendance, depending on the impact of the ECs on teaching and/ or assessment, and the resit might take place almost immediately, in the 'late assessment' period, or at the next normal occasion.
 - The new regulations replace the previous regulations on requesting a late/ deferred assessment and withdrawal from assessment on exceptional grounds. All applications should be made through the EC procedures. The relevant regulations have been amended to reflect this.
 - The new regulations mean that deferrals/ late assessments can be offered to final year students as this is the preferred form of mitigation for ECs, and

that the previous limits on the number of deferred modules has been replaced by the EC Regulations.

- If a student sits an assessment/ submits a piece of work and submits an EC Claim for that assessment, and the EC Panel judges that the EC Claim is valid, the attempt will be disregarded and will not be marked by the assessors. The student will be given another opportunity to sit/ resubmit the assessment.
 - Deferred assessment should be in the same format as the one missed. However, where it is not possible to assess the student in the same format, the Faculty may approve an alternative method of assessment.
- iii. To offer the student a specified extended deadline:
- Programme Directors, Departmental Tutors and Chairs of Programme Boards of Examiners can approve an extension of up to one week. It is expected that one week will be adequate for the vast majority of students to complete an assessment.
 - Where more time is needed, the Faculty/ Departmental EC Panel must approve the decision to help ensure parity for all students. The EC Panel should consult with the relevant teaching team on the appropriateness of a longer extension.
- iv. To condone the late submission of coursework (late submission penalties suspended and full mark awarded):
- The Panel will recommend to the Programme Board of Examiners that the late submission is accepted without penalty i.e. approve an extension retrospectively.
 - In these cases, the student should have indicated on the EC Claim Form that they have submitted late. The EC Panel may need to verify this information with the department concerned.
5. Where none of the above decisions is possible, the EC Panel may need to make one of the following decisions, again without knowledge of the marks for the module(s) concerned:
- v. To exclude the affected component from the module mark calculation, up to a maximum of 50% of a module:
- The FECP/ DECP should recommend to the Programme Board of Examiners which components should be dropped from the module mark. Up to 50% of the module components may be excluded (including single components worth 50% or multiple components totalling no more than 50%).
- vi. To exclude the affected module from the classification calculation, up to a maximum total of 30 credits (1 course unit) across the whole programme:
- The FECP/ DECP should recommend to the Programme Board of Examiners which modules should be dropped from the weighted average mark/ classification.
 - The standard requirements for the number of completed and passed modules still apply; the affected module mark is simply excluded from the calculation of the weighted average.
 - It is recognised that, on some programmes, Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body requirements do not allow modules to be failed. However, the module may still be excluded from UCL's calculation of the degree classification.

- The above regulation should not apply to progression calculations, unless a programme stipulates a minimum progression threshold (e.g. on MSci or MEng awards). In these cases, the FECP/ DECP may recommend that the affected module is excluded from the weighted average mark for progression.
- vii. To give special consideration to any weighted average marks falling within the 1% Borderline Zone:
- If none of the above options is possible, the FECP may make a provisional recommendation to the Programme Board of Examiners that, if the student should fall within the 1% Borderline Zone, the Board of Examiners may consider uplifting the student to the next classification on the basis of Extenuating Circumstances. The student's weighted average mark must fall within the 1% Borderline Zone, but the Board of Examiners may use its discretion to exempt the student from other borderline criteria (such as 50% of marks being in the higher class).
 - ECs can no longer be used to move a student into the Borderline Zone; the student must fall within the Borderline Zone based on their actual performance.
- viii. To give additional consideration under the Undergraduate Special or Aegrotat Provisions, where applicable:
- If none of the above options is possible (e.g. the student has failed more than 30 credits and is not in a position to resit) undergraduate students may be considered under Section 2.11: Undergraduate Special and Aegrotat Provisions.

11 Board of Examiners' Decision

1. Programme Boards of Examiners are no longer responsible for decisions relating to Extenuating Circumstances. The Faculty EC Panel has authority delegated from Academic Board to make decisions on all claims, and may in turn delegate that authority to a Departmental EC Panel.
2. The Programme Board of Examiners is responsible for receiving and implementing the recommendation of the FECP/ DECP. In the case of deferrals, extensions and condoned late submissions the Board of Examiners is expected to simply confirm and ratify the decision.
3. In the case of excluding components or modules from the module/ classification calculation, the FECP/ DECP will make a recommendation on the modules to be excluded. The Board of Examiners is responsible for recalculating the result based on this information.
4. The FECP/ DECP may make a provisional recommendation to the Programme Board of Examiners that, if the student should fall within the 1% Borderline Zone, the Board of Examiners may consider uplifting the student to the next classification on the basis of ECs. The student's weighted average mark must fall within the 1% Borderline Zone, but the Board of Examiners may use its discretion to exempt the student from other borderline criteria (such as 50% of marks being in the higher class).
5. If a student's weighted average mark is not in the Borderline Zone, the Board of Examiners should make no adjustments.
6. Boards of Examiners can no longer raise a student's classification if the student is not in the Borderline Zone or move the student into the Borderline Zone on the basis of ECs.
7. There is no longer a system of 'banking' ECs until consideration of the student's classification at the end of the programme.

8. Boards of Examiners are not permitted to change the weighting of an assessment component or module as a form of mitigation.
9. All EC claims must be received through the channels described in the regulations. Tutors and other members of staff must not raise new ECs at the Board of Examiners meeting or any other forum.
10. The Board of Examiners cannot make any decisions relating to ECs which have not been referred to it by the FECP/ DECP.

12 Communication of Information

1. Where an extension of up to one week has been granted by the Programme Director or equivalent, the programme team/administrator must inform the FECP/ DECP in writing to ensure that the EC Panel itself does not give the student any further mitigation for the same circumstances. A log of cases can be kept and forwarded to the FECP/ DECP at regular intervals to make this process more efficient.
2. Assessment and Student Records should inform each FECP about any events in examination halls that have affected an individual student or group of students. FECPs should disseminate this information to DECPs as appropriate.
3. The Special Assessment Arrangements Panel should inform each FECP about any students who have been granted Special Assessment Arrangements for chronic or long-term conditions or disabilities. FECPs should disseminate this information to DECPs as appropriate.

13 Responsibility for Record Keeping

1. Programme Directors and administrators are responsible for ensuring that claims for extensions of up to one week are processed and communicated to the student in good time. The Programme Team are also responsible for ensuring that the outcomes of claims are logged and forwarded to the FECP Secretary (in batches if necessary) who will maintain the definitive record of claims. It is recommended that each programme nominates a named administrator who, with the assistance of the rest of the administration team, will be responsible for ensuring that all claims are processed efficiently.
2. Claims for Special Assessment Arrangements due to ECs, once forwarded by the receiving office, become the responsibility of the Special Assessment Arrangements Panel. The SAAP Chair and Secretary are responsible for record-keeping, for communication with students and for ensuring that all claims are processed efficiently.
3. The definitive record of all other claims and their outcomes lies with the Faculty EC Panel. Extension decisions by Programme Directors will also be forwarded to the FECP and added to the Panel's records. It is recommended that each Faculty nominates a named FECP Secretary to be responsible, with the assistance of the rest of the faculty administration team, for record-keeping, communicating with students and forwarding decisions to the relevant Boards of Examiners.
4. The FECP is responsible for producing an annual report on the profile of all cases received by the Faculty for consideration by the Academic Regulations and Quality Assurance Sub-Committee of Education Committee. Instructions on the format of the report will be communicated to Faculties each summer.

14 Impact on Other Regulations and Processes

1. The new regulations supersede the previous regulations on requesting a late/ deferred assessment and withdrawal from assessment on exceptional grounds. All applications should be made through the EC procedures. The regulations have been amended to reflect this. This means that deferrals/ late assessments will be available to final year students, and that previous restrictions on the number of deferred/ late assessments are replaced by the new EC regulations.
2. A new EC Claim Form has been published to reflect the new processes.
3. References to tutor notification of ECs under the Late Submission of Coursework regulations have been removed to reflect the new EC regulations.
4. The Undergraduate Special and Aegrotat Provisions have been amended to reflect the revised definition of ECs.
5. The Boards of Examiners Regulations have been amended to reflect the change from pre-meetings to Faculty EC Panels, and to remove references to grading ECs.
6. The full set of regulations has been reviewed to update nomenclature in relation to the new EC regulations.