SSEES Guidance and FAQs on Extenuating Circumstances Procedure 2021-2.

Over the last two years, UCL’s procedures for extenuating circumstances (EC) have been adapted several times to help mitigate the unprecedented impact of Covid 19. The policies for 2021-2 are again slightly different and the purpose of this guide is to help you navigate the current system.

Please read the following carefully before applying for ECs. Further details of the UCL Extenuating Circumstances Policy can be found in Chapter 4, Section 6 of the UCL Academic Manual.

Overarching Principles

The broad definition of an EC is a “sudden, unexpected, significantly disruptive and beyond [your] control”. You can find more specific guidance on what does (and does not) constitute an EC here.

There are 3 main ECs available to students:

1. Deadline extensions to coursework (inc. dissertation).
2. Removal of late penalties to work submitted after the deadline.
3. Deferral of examinations to the next period (e.g. to LSA).

You should not request deferrals for coursework or extensions to exams.

It’s important to understand that there are two routes for applying for ECs.

1. Conventional ECs
2. Self-certified ECs

FAQs

1. **What is the difference between conventional and self-certified ECs?**

You can apply for all 3 types of ECs using either route, but conventional ECs must be considered by the SSEES EC panel and normally require supporting evidence. There is no limit on the number of conventional EC requests you can submit.

Self-certified ECs do not require evidence but there are important limits to their scope:

- You can only self-certify for **up to two separate periods of up to two weeks** (14 calendar days) within the 2021-22 academic session. Postgraduates can self-certify on a third separate occasion, but the third occasion can only be used after the end of Term 3, 2022.
- The **maximum extension is one week for coursework and two weeks for the dissertation**.
- You can only self-certify **once for any given assessment**.
- You must submit a self-certified EC **in advance of an assessment deadline**. But no more than 2 weeks in advance.
- Once you have started any time-limited assessment, you cannot self-certify a deferral to the next assessment period.

2. **So which route should I use?**

Self-certification requests were designed for pandemic-related circumstances where evidence is difficult to obtain e.g. ongoing parenting/ home-schooling, ongoing caring responsibilities, or ongoing employment as a critical worker.

However, they can be used for any event that constitutes a legitimate EC where evidence cannot be obtained. If you can find evidence, it’s a good idea to apply for conventional ECs. Also, if you need
longer extensions, or if you need to apply for extension on top of an existing EC, you must apply for conventional ECs.

3. How do I apply for an EC?

For all types of EC requests use the online form HERE

4. When should I apply for an EC?

Self-certified ECs: No earlier than 2 weeks before the deadline. Requests submitted after the deadline, or after time-limited assessments have started, will not be approved.

Conventional ECs: No more than 2 weeks before the deadline and no more than 7 days after the deadline. If the latter, the expectation is that this is because the EC is ongoing and preventing you from applying for an EC by the deadline.

5. What happens if I submit a conventional EC more than 7 days after the deadline?

Any conventional EC submitted after 7 days is considered a ‘late EC’. Approval requires meeting the late EC criteria - that it was ‘physically or psychologically impossible’ for you to have submitted an EC on time. In other words, it’s not enough to describe the EC, you have to demonstrate that it was literally impossible for you to tell us about it (e.g. you were completely incapacitated). This is a very high bar to reach, so however bad your situation make sure you submit an EC on time even if you don’t yet have the evidence.

6. What kind of evidence is required?

This obviously depends on the nature of your EC, but if you are unwell, you should provide a doctor’s note. If your evidence isn’t written in English, you must provide a notarised translation. Please avoid sending photographs that you think illustrate your condition.

7. What if I don’t have the evidence yet?

You should submit the EC on time and indicate that your evidence will be forthcoming. Your EC will only be validated on receipt and evaluation of your evidence.

8. How will I know if my EC has been approved and how long will this take?

If you self-certify then you will hear immediately. A conventional EC will need to be considered by the SSEES EC panel and this can take up to 10 days if we are receiving a very high volume of requests. Please be patient.

9. Are IT issues acceptable grounds for an EC?

Routine computer problems such as viruses, disk corruption, printer problems, and short-term network problems are not normally considered acceptable grounds for an EC. You are expected to take proper precautions and make back-up copies of your work and allow enough time to produce your work.

10. What’s the maximum length of extensions I can request?

Students are permitted one week of self-certified extension without evidence (two weeks for dissertations). There is no official limit for conventional ECs, but anything over 12 weeks can only be authorised by the Joint Faculty. The length of extension you request should be commensurate to the
EC you describe and the evidence you provide – the EC panel will consider the most appropriate form of mitigation and may grant an extension of greater or shorter length than requested.

11. How are extensions deadlines calculated?

Extensions will be granted from the original or last approved deadline, not the decision date (students should therefore continue to work on their assessment if they are able to while a decision is being made).

12. Are EC extensions added on top of SORAs?

Where a student has a SoRA, extensions will be granted from the adjusted deadline. Students will not be entitled to their SoRA adjustment again on top of an EC extension.

E.g. Original deadline is 1/5/22 and student has a SoRA extending this to 8/5/21. If the student has a two-week EC extension approved the new deadline will be 22/5/22.

13. Can one of my self-certified EC requests cover more than one deadline?

Yes, as long as they fall within the same 14-day period. You can submit a self-certified EC to cover any assessments (including exams) falling within that period.

E.g. student has deadline of 14/5/21 for module X and 26/5/21 for module Y. Both deadlines would be covered by the EC and would only count as one of your two self-certified opportunities (three if you’re a postgrad).

14. Can I apply for two consecutive self-certified ECs?

**Back-to-back self-certified ECs are not allowed.** If you are still unable to meet the deadline you must submit a conventional EC.

15. Can I use self-certified ECs to push an assessment into the next period, as was the case in 2020-1?

Not in the same way. Firstly, you can only defer time-limited assessments (e.g. exams) to the next assessment period. Secondly, you can only self-certify on two separate occasions (and they must be 14 days apart). Thirdly, you can only request deferrals 2 weeks in advance of the event.

16. Will applying for an EC negatively affect my grade?

Not in any way.