



# Extenuating Circumstances

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## 1. Introduction

Ada, the National College for Digital Skills (“the College”), acknowledges that students and apprentices may, on occasion, encounter serious medical, personal, or other unforeseen difficulties beyond their reasonable control. Such circumstances may substantially impair a student’s capacity to study effectively and/or adversely affect performance in assessments.

This Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure (“the Policy”) has been developed with reference to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) Good Practice Framework: Requests for Additional Consideration.

The purpose of this Policy is to establish a formal process through which students and apprentices may notify the College of such “extenuating circumstances” and, where appropriate, access suitable support and consideration.

## 2. Definition of Exenuating Circumstances

For a situation to be considered under this Policy, it must satisfy the following criteria:

- **Severe and Exceptional:** The circumstance must be of a serious nature and exceed the normal challenges typically associated with student life.
- **Unforeseen or Unavoidable:** The circumstance could not reasonably have been anticipated or prevented by the student.
- **Timely:** The circumstance must have arisen immediately prior to, or during, the relevant assessment period.
- **Impactful:** The circumstance must demonstrably impair the student’s ability to

prepare for, attend, or perform at the expected level in an assessment or examination.

### **3. Relationship to Learner Support Documentation (Learner Passport)**

This Policy is designed to address unforeseen, acute, and short-term circumstances. It is distinct from the provision of ongoing support for long-term conditions, which is managed through the LP.

Students and apprentices with a recognised disability, long-term health condition, or specific learning difficulty will ordinarily have a LP in place. The reasonable adjustments set out within a LP are the primary means of support for foreseeable and continuing impacts of such conditions. Examples of such adjustments include additional time for examinations or extended deadlines for coursework.

This Policy does not apply to matters already addressed through a LP. However, a student or apprentice with an existing LP may submit an application under this Policy where they experience a separate, acute, or unrelated issue (for example, a sudden bereavement, accidental injury, or illness unconnected to the condition covered by the LP).

### **4. What are Extenuating Circumstances**

At Ada, The National College for Digital Skills, Extenuating Circumstances as defined in section 2 which may appreciably impair a student's or apprentice's academic performance in one or more assessed activities. Such circumstances may occur suddenly or develop over a period of time, and may include medical matters or events directly affecting someone other than the student or apprentice.

The College adopts a structured, three-tier approach to support students and apprentices experiencing extenuating circumstances:

## 1. **Extension of Assessment Deadlines**

### 1.1. Self-Certified Three-Day Extension:

- Students and apprentices may request a short extension of up to three working days without the need to provide evidence. This option is designed to cover minor but unforeseen difficulties that temporarily prevent completion of work. It applies only to non-time-constrained assessments (e.g., essays, reports, or projects) and is not available for event-based assessments such as examinations, tests, or performances.

### 1.2. Evidenced Extensions

- Where circumstances require more than three additional days, or where the assessment type is not eligible for self-certification, students and apprentices may apply for an evidenced extension. Extensions are intended to accommodate short-term, acute circumstances without compromising academic standards, and will usually be approved for up to 10 working days after the assessment deadline.

## 2. **Deferral of Assessment**

In cases where students or apprentices are unable to attend or complete an assessment within the scheduled period due to extenuating circumstances, they may be permitted to defer the assessment to a later date. This ensures that assessments are completed fairly while maintaining the integrity of the process.

### **3. Interruption of Study**

For more significant or prolonged circumstances, students and apprentices may be allowed a temporary break from their studies. This option is designed to support individuals who require an extended period to recover or manage serious personal or medical issues, enabling them to return to study without disadvantage.

### **5. Apprenticeship break in learning**

Apprentices undertaking a higher or degree apprenticeship should, in the first instance, discuss their circumstances with both their employer and their Skills Coach before seeking approval of a *break in learning* and subsequently enacting the Interruption of Study procedure.

An approved break in learning replaces the evidential requirements of this procedure and will therefore automatically ensure the approval of an interruption.

### **6. Grounds for Extenuating Circumstances**

Extenuating circumstances are serious, unforeseen, and unavoidable situations that significantly impair a student's or apprentice's ability to engage with their studies or assessments.

Examples of circumstances that may be considered include, but are not limited to:

- Significant physical or psychological illness.
- Severe personal difficulties affecting wellbeing or ability to study.
- Serious illness or death of an immediate family member.
- Sudden deterioration in a long-standing medical condition or disability.
- Being the victim of a serious crime.

- Legal proceedings requiring compulsory attendance at court.

#### Circumstances Not Considered:

It is recognised that Higher Education is demanding and places additional responsibilities on students and apprentices. Developing resilience and effective management of workloads is an essential part of the learning experience. For this reason, the following would not normally be accepted as valid grounds for an extenuating circumstances claim:

- Failure to read or follow the examination timetable or coursework deadlines correctly.
- Pressure of work, including employment or voluntary commitments.
- Failure to save work properly, or loss due to IT or equipment failure.
- Minor illnesses or self-induced conditions (e.g., colds, hangovers).
- Religious festivals.
- Domestic or personal disruptions that could reasonably have been foreseen or planned for (e.g., moving house, holidays).
- Sporting commitments or fixtures.

Note: The lists above are indicative and not exhaustive. Each case will be considered on its individual merits in line with this policy.

The College recognises that students and apprentices may sometimes experience challenges in balancing study, work, and personal commitments. Where workload or study pressures become difficult to manage, students and apprentices are strongly encouraged to seek support at the earliest opportunity.

## 7. Application Process

Applications for Extenuating Circumstances (EC) and Interruption of Study (IoS) must be supported by relevant documentary evidence except where a student or apprentice is applying for self-certified three-day extension.

It is the responsibility of the student to complete and submit the application. In exceptional cases, a student may nominate an advocate to apply on their behalf where they are unable to do so due to physical or mental incapacity. Academic Staff or Skills Coaches cannot initiate the process but may, in particularly sensitive situations, submit a written statement to the Panel in support of a student's claim for PMC or IoS.

Extension requests must normally be submitted in advance of the published assessment deadline. To ensure timely review by the Panel, which convenes each Monday, students and apprentices are strongly advised to submit their application no later than 12 noon on the preceding Friday. In exceptional circumstances, such as sudden illness or an unforeseen emergency, a late request may be submitted, provided it is supported by appropriate evidence explaining why it could not reasonably have been made earlier. Requests submitted after the deadline without acceptable evidence will not normally be approved.

For both PMC and IoS applications:

- The application form must clearly identify each module and each assignment covered by the request, including all relevant dates.
- Failure to complete the form in full will delay consideration.
- Applications received without appropriate evidence will be delayed and may not be approved by the Panel.
- Applications must be submitted via the online form, which can be accessed here: [Ada HE Extension Request](#)

The Panel convenes each Monday to consider applications. To ensure timely review, students and apprentices are strongly advised to submit their application no later than 12 noon on the preceding Friday.

All correspondence relating to applications will normally be conducted through College email. Students and apprentices are therefore advised to check their email accounts regularly to monitor the progress of their application.

## **8. The Panel**

All applications will be considered by the Exenuating Circumstances Panel and all students and apprentices will be treated fairly and equitably. Decisions are based on the following criteria:

- Whether the claim was submitted on time. If not, whether acceptable evidence has been provided to justify late submission.
  
- Whether the circumstances meet the following requirements:
  - They have impacted the student's ability to attend or complete assessments at the published time.
  - They were outside the student's control and could not reasonably have been predicted.
  
- Whether any evidence submitted (where required) is appropriate and sufficient.

Once a decision has been reached, students and apprentices will be notified via their College email account. While claims are considered as a priority, decisions may take a few working days. Students and Apprentices applying for an extension to a coursework deadline should not delay submission of their work while awaiting a decision.

## 9. Appeals Against Extenuating Circumstances Decisions

Students and apprentices may appeal a decision against the Extenuating Circumstances Panel in relation to the outcome on the following grounds:

- The Extenuating Circumstances procedure was not followed correctly.
- The decision or outcome was unreasonable
- New material evidence has become available which could not, for good reason, be provided earlier in the process.
- There is a reasonable perception of bias in the handling of the application.

To submit an appeal, students and apprentices must complete the Appeals Form and submit it, together with any supporting evidence, within the stated timeline.

Further details, including eligibility, grounds for appeal, and procedural requirements, are set out in the [Academic Appeals Policy](#), which students and apprentices are required to consult when preparing an appeal.