

Extenuating Circumstances Policy

Section 1 - INTRODUCTION

Purpose

(1) This policy sets out the principles for ensuring that students who are legitimately prevented from making a fair attempt at an assessment are afforded other opportunities to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes.

Scope

To whom does the policy apply?

(2) This policy applies to students undertaking Hibernia College programmes, including those validated by QQI leading to awards on the [National Framework of Qualifications \(NFQ\)](#).

Who is responsible for implementing the policy?

(3) Programme Directors or nominees from Faculty are responsible for determining if a student's circumstances qualify as extenuating circumstances for the purposes of an assessment.

Definitions

(4) Extenuating Circumstances are serious and unforeseen situations or circumstances beyond the student's control which provide a valid reason for preventing a student from making a fair attempt at an assessment in order to demonstrate attainment of learning outcomes. They must arise within a reasonable timeframe to have impacted on attainment of learning outcomes or represent a serious and unexpected deterioration in a pre-existing circumstance. Extenuating circumstances are not:

- a. The usual difficulty or workload of an academic programme
- b. Pre-existing factors which are known to the student
- c. Normal life events that do not affect ability to undertake an assessment
- d. Factors which do not arise close to or during a summative assessment event
- e. Factors affecting an entire cohort (these are dealt with by the Board of Examiners directly)
- f. A reasonable accommodation which has already been accommodated for

Section 2 - CONTEXT

Legal or Regulatory Context

QA Guidelines

(5) This policy generally supports the implementation of our regulatory obligation to have policy and procedures in place to support the assessment of learners.

Assessment Policy

(6) This policy is designed to support the principle of fairness set out in our [Assessment, Grading and Certification Policy](#).

Section 3 - POLICY STATEMENTS

Part A - Principles for Considering and Managing Applications for the Consideration of Extenuating Circumstances

Fairness

(7) Students are entitled to undertake assessment in a fair and reasonable context, in equivalent circumstances to their peers. Where unforeseen circumstances arise which negatively impact on a student's performance, they have the right to seek particular consideration in respect of the submission and marking of a particular assessment task.

(8) No student can be deemed to have passed any module or programme unless the learning outcomes have been achieved. In deciding that a student's performance may have been adversely affected by unforeseen circumstances, the mechanism to provide fairness may involve offering a student a repeat attempt, without any penalty, e.g. for grading purposes treating the repeat attempt as if it were the original attempt.

(9) Granting of mitigations in respect of extenuating circumstances is provisional until agreed by the Board of Examiners.

Student Responsibility

(10) Students are responsible for:

- a. Providing original and verifiable evidence of the factors affecting their efforts in their application
- b. Making reasonable use of the policies and procedures and support services available in Hibernia College to defray any impact of personal circumstances on their efforts (applying for reasonable accommodation, for instance)

Fit to Submit

(11) A student who attempts an assessment, without having made use of the policies, procedures and support services offered by the College is normally understood to have deemed themselves fit to carry out the assessment task.

Possible Unfair Advantage

(12) In applying for consideration of extenuating circumstances in the marking of an assessment, no student may seek to gain an unfair advantage over other students or to evade, or attempt to evade, demonstration of the learning outcomes for the piece of learning being assessed.

Part B - Possible Outcomes of Applications for Extenuating Circumstances

(13) Students following the [Extenuating Circumstances Procedure](#) may be granted:

- a. No mitigation - where students are required to complete the assessment as normal, which will be graded as

normal

- b. An extension – a revised deadline for completion of an assessment task
- c. Use of a repeat opportunity as a first fair attempt, subject to payment of repeat fee
- d. A recommendation to the Board of Examiners to revise a mark in light of the circumstances evidenced and the original grade for the assessment task (which is not a comment on the soundness of any original academic judgement)
- e. Another outcome agreed in writing with the College and approved by the Programme Director

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	2nd October 2023
Review Date	2nd October 2026
Approval Authority	Quality Assurance Officer
Approval Date	29th September 2023
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Enquiries Contact	Quality Assurance

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Module" - A programme of education and training of small volume. It is designed to be capable of being integrated with other modules into larger programmes. A module can be shared by different programmes. Some modules are designed to lead to minor or special-purpose awards. In describing the educational formation provided by an independent module, it is sufficient to specify the learning outcome and (the assumed (i.e. minimum) prior learning (prerequisite learning)). Assumed prior learning is sometimes specified by listing prerequisite modules.

"Policy" - Policies are principled statements adopted by the College at a high level to enable decisions about actions and desired outcomes to which the College is committed. They clearly articulate the formal position of the College on specific issues in order to guide internal decision-making. Policies set out 'what to do' on a given issue. They have a medium- to long-term review cycle.

"Procedure" - Procedures are the broad actions that must be carried out to implement a policy. They set out 'how to do' what the policy specifies must be done.

"Programme" - A programme of education and training refers to any process by which learners may acquire knowledge, skill or competence. It includes courses of study or instruction, apprenticeships, training and employment. A programme offers learners the learning opportunities by which they may attain educational goals (expressed as the intended programme learning outcome) by learning activities in a learning environment. A programme is normally comprised of modules. A programme leading to a major award will normally require a 'cohesion generating' process which integrates constituent modules so that the minimum intended programme learning outcomes are supported. The cohesion generating process should establish the epistemological and cultural identity of the programme. It should also coordinate alignment of activities with the minimum intended programme learning outcomes and introduce learners to the broader community of practice to which they aspire. (QQI (2013) Assessment and Standards Revised)

"Reasonable Accommodation" - 'A Reasonable Accommodation is any action that helps to alleviate a substantial disadvantage due to an impairment or medical condition.' (AHEAD). In the context of supporting higher education students, a reasonable accommodation is any provision made for a particular student to allow them to demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcomes of a piece of learning without any disadvantage which may arise on the basis of their having a disability or long-term illness.

"Extenuating Circumstances" - Extenuating Circumstances are unexpected factors or emergencies arising close to or during a summative assessment event (normally up to three days in advance) having a material effect on the student's preparation for or performance in that summative assessment task, where the student can provide evidence for them.