



**Policy on**

**Extenuating Circumstances**

**Approved**

**27<sup>th</sup> October 2025**

**Approved by**

**Senior Leadership Team**

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| <b>Policy Title</b>   | <b>Policy on Extenuating Circumstances</b> |
| <b>Document Owner</b> | <b>Director of HE</b>                      |

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| <b>Directorates and Departments affected by this Policy</b> | <b>All Higher Education Curriculum Staff</b> |
| <b>Procedure Effective From</b>                             | <b>November 2025</b>                         |
| <b>Next Review Date</b>                                     | <b>November 2030</b>                         |

New College Durham is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, as well as vulnerable adults, and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

If you require this document in an alternative format and/or language, please contact [records@newdur.ac.uk](mailto:records@newdur.ac.uk)

We review our policies regularly to update them and to ensure that they are accessible and fair to all. All policies are subject to equality impact assessments which are carried out to determine whether the policy has, or is likely to have, a different impact on those with protected characteristics. We are always keen to hear from anyone who wants to contribute to these impact assessments and we welcome suggestions for improving the accessibility of fairness of this and all College policies.

[This policy has been assessed for its compliance with the principles of the OIA Good Practice Framework]

To make suggestions or to see further information please contact:

**Director of Higher Education**

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## 1. **Scope**

Students are expected to demonstrate their achievement of learning through the successful completion of module assessments. However, the College recognises that sometimes, through unexpected and unavoidable circumstances, students are unable to submit assessments or perform in an examination to the full extent of their abilities. These are referred to as Extenuating Circumstances.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Extenuating Circumstances are considered consistently across the institution and its collaborative partners. This policy applies to all Higher Education programmes at New College Durham including qualifications awarded by New College Durham, The Open University, Pearson and other awarding bodies.

## 2. **Responsibilities**

The Principal and Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy.

The Vice Principal of Higher Education is responsible for overseeing the implementation of sections 4 to 10.

Programme Teams are responsible for ensuring all students are provided with appropriate advice and guidance in relation to the policy and procedure through induction and ongoing support mechanisms.

## 3. **Relationship with Existing Policies and Regulations**

This policy should be read in the context of the following College policies and related procedures:

- Mitigation procedure;
- A Student Guide to Extenuating Circumstances A Staff Guide to Extenuating Circumstances Mitigation Panel Agenda;
- Appeals policy and procedure.

## 4. **Definitions**

*Extenuating Circumstances*

Extenuating Circumstances are normally defined as ‘unforeseeable or unpreventable circumstances that could have, or did have, a significant adverse effect on the academic performance of a student’.

### *Extension*

An extension is an allowance of up to an additional 7 calendar days beyond the published point of assessment. An extension is granted for an unforeseen circumstance beyond a student's control which impacts a student at the point of submission, and where the impact is not expected to last longer than 7 calendar days.

### *Mitigation*

Mitigation is a recommendation/outcome determined by the extenuating circumstances panel to ensure a student is not disadvantaged by extenuating circumstances.

## **5. Extensions**

A Programme Leader/ Module Tutor may use their discretion to permit an extension, on the point of assessment (at least 24 hours before the submission deadline). Extensions must not be granted for an examination of any type, including time constrained test, or Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE).

An extension is for an unforeseen circumstance beyond a student's control which impacts a student at the point of submission, and where the impact is not expected to last longer than 7 calendar days. Examples include short term illness or injury; short term mental ill-health as evidenced through a professional body; a worsening ongoing medical issue; bereavement, long term relationship breakdown; assault, victim of a crime and unforeseen caring responsibilities.

An extension of up to 7 calendar days may be granted in line with the Academic Regulations of the Awarding Body.

## **6. Mitigation**

Extenuating Circumstances are normally defined as unforeseeable or unpreventable circumstances that could have, or did have, a significant adverse effect on the academic performance of a student' (please refer to the staff and/or student guides for extenuating circumstances examples). Students may apply for mitigation in the following circumstances;

- They have experienced extenuating circumstances which have prevented them from submitting their work on time, and which have lasted or are expected to last longer than 7 calendar days.

- They have experienced Extenuating circumstances which have prevented them from completing an examination or which the student believes has impacted their performance in an exam.

If a student who has previously applied for an extension, at the point of assessment, remains unable to submit this assessment by the extended submission deadline owing to ongoing extenuating circumstances, they can apply for mitigation (subject to the relevant body regulations for the programme) students are expected to provide evidence.

Applications for Mitigation for Extenuating Circumstances must be submitted by the published deadline for the next available Extenuating Circumstances Panel following the published point of assessment.

Only in exceptional circumstances will a late application be considered for mitigation. Late Applications must be accompanied by evidence which demonstrates the student has been unable to engage with their programme to submit an application at an earlier date.

Where students are experiencing significant, longer-term personal issues a discussion should take place with the Programme Leader/Module Tutor to consider the option of a Suspension of Studies prior to the Mitigation Application being made.

## **7. Confidentiality**

All submissions giving details of extenuating circumstances will be treated as confidential by the College. However, there may be occasions where New College Durham is required to share relevant information with University/Awarding Body staff and/or a Professional Statutory or Regulatory Body linked to the programme.

## **8. Mitigation Panel**

The Mitigation Panel is an essential mechanism in ensuring fairness and impartiality in giving due consideration to applications made by students, whose ability to undertake an assessment or whose ability during an assessment activity was compromised through unexpected and unavoidable circumstances.

The panel will be responsible for receiving and considering all applications and associated evidence. The panel will agree to a recommendation/outcome. This will be presented at the subsequent Assessment Board(s) by HEDU using the mitigation log which is managed by HE Admin.

The substantive details and nature of the extenuating circumstances themselves are not disclosed to the Board.

## **8. Ongoing Extenuating Circumstances/ Reasonable Adjustments**

Where a student has a pre-existing condition(s) or other circumstances which may impact upon their studies on an on-going basis, they are required to declare this upon registration (enrolment), and the College will endeavor to provide appropriate support and make reasonable adaptations/adjustments throughout their studies.

For further information: [Supporting disabled students - OIAHE](#)

For these circumstances, the student should not need to make an application for extenuating circumstances as their assessment processes will be adjusted by mutual agreement to take account of their study and support needs. This would not preclude a request for an extension or an application for mitigation if at the point of assessment, the ability to perform or their performance has been affected by other extenuating circumstances.

Where a student has a pre-existing medical condition or extenuating circumstance that only impacts upon their studies on an ad hoc basis, they are required to declare this upon registration. This would not preclude them from applying for an extension to their assessment deadline or an application for mitigation if, and at the point when, their studies may be affected. The student will be required to provide up to date evidence to support the extenuating circumstance at the point of assessment.

It may be necessary for students with on-going or long-term extenuating circumstances to submit an application for extenuating circumstances at more than one point in an academic year to support any ad hoc occurrences / episodes of their condition. Up to date evidence should be supplied with each application.

## **9. Right to Appeal**

Where an Extenuating Circumstances Application is rejected, the student has the opportunity to lodge an appeal via the Academic Appeals Procedure within 10 College days of the date on the outcomes letter.

## **10. Evaluation and review**

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored annually and reviewed every 5 years in light of experience and best practice. This mechanism recognises that changes to legislation may prompt a review of the policy before the five years stipulated

