

**EXTENUATING
CIRCUMSTANCES
PROCEDURE
2025/26**

Extenuating Circumstances Procedure 2025/26

Policy Owner/Procedure: ELT

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Consultation:

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CMT		
Unions		
Students		
Employees		
Employers/Stakeholders		

Any Associated Documentation, for Reference:

HE Student Transfer Plan, Student Protection Plan, Interruption to Study Guidance, Academic Appeals Procedure.

ELT SIGN-OFF: Marie Haworth, Vice Principal Quality, Teaching, Learning & Student Support



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Extenuating Circumstances Procedure

1. Introduction

This procedure applies to the provision of higher education programmes delivered at Preston College.

The College recognises that students may occasionally experience serious medical or personal circumstances which can severely disrupt their ability to study and affect their performance in an assessment. This procedure provides students with the opportunity to inform the College of these circumstances.

Support mechanisms between a student, their tutors and the HE Student Support and Wellbeing Coordinator are established at the earliest opportunity of a student's enrolment. Extenuating Circumstances applications will therefore normally only be granted where there has been an adverse change in a student's circumstances after their enrolment, or where Extenuating Circumstances have been previously granted there must be an adverse change in a student's circumstances that can be independently evidenced.

2. Apprenticeship Breaks in Learning

Apprentices undertaking a higher apprenticeship should in the first instance discuss their circumstances with both their employer and Curriculum Leader before seeking approval of a break in learning and subsequently enacting the Interruption to Study procedure.

An approved break in learning replaces the evidential requirements of this procedure and will therefore automatically ensure the approval of an interruption. It is worth noting that for the same reasons as any other student, an apprentice will normally complete a return to study plan to ensure their return to study is academically sound.

3. What are Extenuating Circumstances?

Extenuating Circumstances are a serious, significant event or events, which are unforeseen and/or unavoidable and that may appreciably impair a student's academic performance in one or more assessed activities and may possibly occur over a period of time. Extenuating Circumstances may include medical matters or events directly affecting someone other than the student.

For a claim to be accepted, the student must be able to demonstrate that extenuating circumstances are ALL of the following:

Significant	The event or circumstances must have had a serious impact on their studies.
Unexpected	The student must normally have had no prior knowledge that a particular event or circumstance would occur.
Unpreventable	There must have been no reasonable steps that the student could have taken to prevent the event or circumstance from occurring.

Relevant	The student must be able to link the event or circumstance, and its impact, on the period for which the application is being made.
Corroborated	An application for extenuating circumstances must meet the normal requirements for independent documentary evidence (see supporting evidence section).

Not all difficult or distressing events will constitute extenuating circumstances; there must be a demonstrable adverse effect on the student's academic performance, which may take several forms:

- The student was unable to submit work by a deadline or attend a scheduled test, examination, or practical activity.
- The event or circumstance may have caused the student to underperform in an assessment, either in the preparation for the assessment, or on the day (i.e., whilst completing a piece of coursework or undertaking revision and/or sitting an examination).
- Requests for extenuation must be submitted as soon as possible in advance of the due date for any assessment which the student wishes to be considered for extenuating circumstances.

If a request for extenuation is submitted after the submission date, it will not be considered.

4. What is an Interruption to Study (ItS)?

If a student is temporarily unable to engage with their studies, they can apply for an authorised Interruption to Study. An Interruption to Study involves taking a complete break from study for an agreed period of time, usually for up to one academic year. Please note that where a student is applying for Interruption to Study the same criteria for approval as Extenuating Circumstances are used i.e. a student may not interrupt their studies without good reason, there must be circumstances beyond their control that will have an adverse effect on their studies.

5. Grounds for ECs/ItS and acceptable evidence

Examples of Extenuating Circumstances may include but are not limited to:

- Significant physical or psychological illness
- Severe personal difficulties
- Serious illness or death of an immediate family member/close friend
- Sudden deterioration in a long-standing medical condition or disability
- Being the victim of a serious crime
- Legal proceedings requiring attendance at court

6. Reasons not considered

Studying higher education undoubtedly places pressure on students. The ability to manage workloads and competing pressures is therefore a skill which is further refined

during studies. The following reasons would therefore not be considered as valid claims for Extenuating Circumstances:

- Failure to read the examination timetable or coursework deadline properly
- Pressure of work
- Failure to save work properly / failure of IT equipment
- Minor illnesses or self-induced conditions (colds, hangovers etc.)
- Religious festivals
- Domestic or personal disruptions which may have been anticipated (e.g. moving house, holidays etc.)
- Sporting fixtures

The list above is not exhaustive and should therefore be used as an indicative guide.

7. Supporting evidence

Examples of evidence of Extenuating Circumstances	
Serious physical illness	Medical certificate/hospital report/report from qualified medical practitioner on letter headed paper
Psychological illness	Report from a psychiatrist, psychologist or Counselling Service
Severe personal difficulties	Report from a Counselling Service, Welfare Service or another qualified professional
Serious illness or death of an immediate family member or close friend	A medical report from a qualified medical practitioner or a copy of a death certificate accompanied if necessary by formal documentation confirming relationship with deceased
Sudden deterioration in a long-standing medical condition or disability	A medical report from an appropriate, qualified medical practitioner
Being the victim of a serious crime	Crime report and number
Legal proceedings requiring attendance at court	Documentary evidence from the court or a solicitor

8. EC Applications

There is no automatic right for an extension to be granted and students are advised to continue working to the original submission deadline until a decision regarding the extenuating circumstance application is received. Academic penalties will be applied to summative assessments that are submitted after the published deadline, without approved extenuating circumstance in accordance with the relevant awarding partner/body's regulations.

Applications will, normally, only be accepted before an assessment date when a student is aware that they will be unable to attend an examination or submit a piece of assessed work and as with all applications, evidence must be produced to support the application.

Applications submitted within 3 calendars days of the assessment deadline/exam date.

There will be occasions when students are not fit to attend on the day of an examination, test or other form of assessment in such cases they should:

- Notify the College's Absence Hotline via [Report Your Absence - Preston College](#)
- Seek medical advice on the day and provide documentary evidence of incapacity
- Submit a Extenuating Circumstances Application Form within ten working days

If taken ill during an examination, test or other form of assessment the following action should be taken:

- Notify the Senior Invigilator or Academic Tutor in charge so that a report can be made
- Seek medical attention on the day and provide documentary evidence of incapacity
- Submit a Extenuating Circumstances Application Form within ten working days of the assessment

Applications received after ten working days of the submission or examination date will not normally be considered. The outcome of an approved application is that, for coursework, a revised assessment deadline or for practical assessments or examinations a new date will be provided to the student by the Curriculum Leader and Module/Unit Tutor

9. Appeals

Students or apprentices have the right of appeal when an application has either been partially or wholly rejected. Where the original panel's decision is to reject, either because the application form was incomplete, or they were unable to decide because of a lack of evidence, students or apprentices should submit a new application and not an appeal.

Appeals will therefore only be heard when a student or apprentice believes that the rejection of their application has been in some way unreasonable or prejudiced.

10. General Data Protection Regulation

Students and apprentices should be aware that any information provided to support an application for either Extenuating Circumstances or Interruption to Study will always be treated as confidential and only shared with relevant colleagues. Information provided by students or apprentices within the scope of this policy, may however be used in conjunction with another College procedure as appropriate. The College's Data Protection Policy is available on the College website: [Policies & Procedures - Preston College](#)

Appendix 1. EC and ItS Application Process

1. Students are advised to seek advice from a Module Tutor or Course Leader initially, if they have concerns about meeting deadlines. If a student's circumstances relate to a

long-term condition or disability they have not previously declared, they should contact the Student Support and Wellbeing Coordinator.

2. Student completes and submits Extenuating Circumstances form (including evidence) prior to assessment deadline or within 3 calendar days of assessment deadline/examination date if incident requiring extenuating circumstances occurs on the assessment deadline/exam date.
3. The [Extenuating Circumstances Form](#) is available via the College website, **HE Student Hub** or from the **HE Team**.
4. Student completes the EC/ItS application form and submits it to ExtenuatingCircumstances@preston.ac.uk with supporting evidence.
5. It is a student's responsibility to complete and submit the application. In exceptional circumstances a student may nominate an advocate to submit the application on their behalf if they are unable to do so because of physical or mental incapacity. Academic colleagues cannot initiate the process but may, in exceptionally sensitive situations present a written statement to the Panel in support of a student claim for ECs or ItS.
6. Applications for Extenuating Circumstances and Interruption to Study (ItS) must be supported by relevant documentary evidence.
7. For both EC and ItS applications, the form must indicate clearly each module/unit and each assessment covered by the application and must confirm all relevant dates. Failure to complete the form in full will delay applications. Any applications received without evidence will delay the application and may not be approved by the Panel.
8. Applications should be returned by email ExtenuatingCircumstances@preston.ac.uk or via the college reception to the:
9. Receipt of the application will be acknowledged by email within three working days of receiving it. The applicant will be referred to Student Support and Wellbeing Coordinator or Learning Zone Coordinator who will contact the student to ascertain their support needs. For example, time management or study planning.

Appendix 2. ECs and ItS Virtual Panel

Chair: HE Manager

Membership

Academic Colleagues (x 2)

Student Support and Wellbeing Coordinator (or nominee)

Learning Zone Coordinator (or nominee)

Minuting: Administration

Frequency: Monthly (or additionally as required)

Summary of purpose

Responsible for ensuring the fairness and reliability of all judgments against Extenuating Circumstances or Interruption to Study applications and to consider whether there are actions or events outside the control of a student which may have caused them to fail, to attend an examination, submit work or perform at a lesser academic standard than might have been expected.

Terms of Reference

- To review individual applications to determine whether the Extenuating Circumstances in respect of formal assessments are valid or invalid.
- To review individual applications relating to Interruption to Study to determine whether they are valid or invalid.
- To liaise with Student Support Services to facilitate additional support and, where appropriate, the Safeguarding and Prevent Manager.
- To establish that evidence is valid, i.e., authentic and appropriate and that it relates to the assessment in question and that it has been submitted by the required date.
- To establish, through the HE Manager or nominee, a return to study plan, in terms of previous achievement of assessment(s) in individual modules, for students with approved Interruption of Study.
- To provide an annual report to the Higher Skills and Quality Committee

Date of last review May 2025