

Wouldn't it be great to sail through your studies without any hurdles getting in your way! Unfortunately, life has a way of taking us by surprise and interrupting our plans sometimes. If something happens that you think has had a significant impact on your studies, then it's important to let the University know. At Essex, the way to do this is via the [Extenuating Circumstances](#) process.

WHAT IS AN EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCE?

An 'Extenuating Circumstance' (or EC) is the term used by the University to describe circumstances that are beyond your control and that have a detrimental effect on your usual academic performance. This might be because you are unable to submit a piece of work or attend an examination, or you may feel like you have done less well than you would normally have expected to if the circumstance had not occurred. EC's tend to be of medical or personal nature; they should usually be supported with relevant evidence and be deemed to have had a significant impact on your studies.

HOW DO I MAKE THE UNIVERSITY AWARE OF MY EC'S?

Even if you have spoken to your Personal Tutor or another person at the University about your situation, **EC's can only be considered if they are formally submitted using the Extenuating Circumstances form**. Extenuating circumstances must be submitted prior to the formal deadline, although it is a good idea to complete the form as soon as possible after the circumstance occurs. It is important to explain your circumstances and the impact these have had on you as fully as possible and to provide evidence to support your claim. **Consider this your one and only opportunity to let the University know what's happened - focus not only on what happened but why and how this had a significant impact on your studies.**

You should make sure you report these circumstances before the University's **published deadlines** - once the deadline has passed, it may be too late for them to be considered.

If, due to your circumstances, you cannot attend an exam you should also **report this as an absence** in addition to submitting your EC form.

WHAT EVIDENCE SHOULD I PROVIDE?

Without evidence, it may not be possible for the University to take action on your EC claim so whenever possible you should include supporting documents. It is possible to submit up to two 'self-certifications' per academic year. Self-certification is in place to recognise that for some minor medical illnesses you may not need, or be able, to seek medical attention and therefore, would not be able to provide any evidence. The type of evidence you might be expected to provide will depend on the nature of your circumstances but the University has provided some information about what might be expected on their [webpages](#).

If documents are not provided in English, you will need to provide a translation from an accredited translator.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I SUBMIT AN EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCE CLAIM?

When you submit an EC claim form, this will be assessed by an EC Committee (a designated group within your Department). The committee will consider the circumstances, and any evidence submitted and will make a recommendation to the Board of Examiners if the circumstances should be accepted. The committee are required to make an assessment and to determine the significance and likely impact of your circumstances.

These recommendations are then considered by the Board of Examiners - the formal body which approves the marks for each student. The Board of Examiners usually only meet at the end of the academic year. Using the [Rules of Assessment](#), the Board of Examiners will decide whether a student can progress to the next academic year/stage of study and what degree classification a final year student can be awarded. When there are accepted ECs, they may consider offering additional options to ensure every student is given a fair opportunity to perform to the best of their academic ability.

Typical action the Board of Examiners may take includes offering further reassessment opportunities where these might not usually be allowed, offering voluntary reassessments where a module has been passed but evidence suggests the performance is lower than usual, instating marks for formative assessments etc. The Board of Examiners cannot give additional marks; allow a student to continue if they have not passed all the core modules nor annotate transcripts to explain there were extenuating circumstances.

HOW IS MY EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES CLAIM ASSESSED?

When assessing your extenuating circumstances, the EC Committee are determining whether, and to what extent, your circumstances have affected your academic performance and what action, if any, can be taken. The committee will take the following into account when assessing the significance of your claim:

- The severity of the problem and the length of time involved
- Any supporting documentary evidence that you have been able to provide (EC committees will apply additional leniency in situations where you cannot provide evidence)
- Whether all your work in the same period appears to have been equally affected
- Whether it is possible to gauge the effect of your EC upon your academic performance
- Whether your achievement is consistent with past performance
- The type of assessment, and how long you had to complete the work (The date the work was set and the deadline for submission)

WHAT THE BOARD OF EXAMINERS CAN (AND CAN'T) DO FOR YOU

If your EC claim is accepted, the Exam Board will aim to ensure a fair result based on your performance. The following actions **can be considered by the Exam Board:**

- Offering further reassessment in a module
- Allowing a reassessment attempt to be treated as a first sit, for uncapped marks where capping applies
- Offering voluntary reassessment where the module has been passed but there is evidence that performance may have been affected
- Amending the assessment of a module by changing the weighting of units of coursework assessment that contribute to the overall course assessment (please note that this can only be actioned where the learning outcomes have been met and, normally, where the affected components constitute less than 30% of the module)
- Instating a formative mark for a late piece of work

If you have any questions about the action that you have been given, please contact us at SU Advice and we can provide you with support.

While there are actions that can be taken, there are several things that the Exam Board cannot do for you. The following are a list of actions that **cannot be considered by the Exam Board:**

- Permitting a student to proceed to the next year of study if they have not met the necessary requirements
- Permitting students to fail a core module or fail any published variations to the rules of assessment
- Adding extra marks to a piece of affected work
- Amending marks from previous years of study
- Awarding a higher class of degree if the examiners are not satisfied that this is a fair result based on the student's demonstrated academic performance
- Annotating statements of results/transcripts with comments about the existence of extenuating circumstances

HOW CAN SU ADVICE HELP ME?

SU Advice can discuss and offer guidance on the Extenuating Circumstances procedures and assist you through the process of submitting a form. We cannot write forms for students, but we are happy to discuss what should be included. Please contact us to discuss your circumstances confidentially with one of our advisers.

If you would like our support with this or would like to receive feedback on your EC draft before you submit it, you can download one of our [Client Information forms](#), fill it in and send it over to us at suadvice@essex.ac.uk. We can then book you in for an appointment with one of our advisers. You may wish to attach any relevant documents if you are booking an appointment via email, or to bring them with you to the appointment.