

Academic Policies and Procedures



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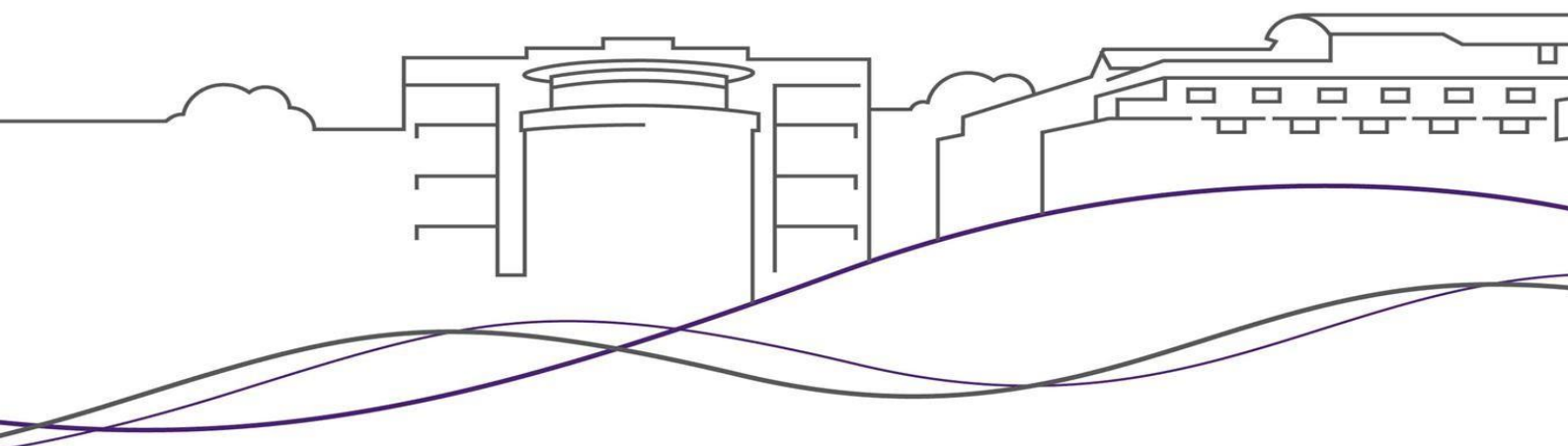
South Devon College

HIGHER EDUCATION

EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES POLICY AND PROCEDURES (HEAPP10) v6.0

For SDC Awards

For UoP Awards follow this [link](#)



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2 Introduction

The aim of this extenuating circumstances policy is to ensure that no student is disadvantaged in academic assessments by circumstances beyond their control, whilst maintaining academic standards.

During your studies, there may be times where you face situations that:

- have an impact on your ability to attend or complete your assessment(s) at the usual time, and
- are outside of your control or you could not reasonably have predicted

We refer to these situations as ‘extenuating circumstances’, often shortened to ‘ECs’. If you are affected by extenuating circumstances, we want to support you and can take these circumstances into account by allowing you to, for example:

- submit your assessment slightly later than the published deadline, or
- not submit your assessment at the usual time, but have an opportunity to be assessed at a later date, or
- not attend a time specific assessment (such as an examination, test or presentation), but have an opportunity to be assessed at a later date

2.1 Reasons for claiming extenuating circumstances

People are affected differently by different circumstances, so it is difficult to provide an exact list of reasons of what might or might not be approved. The key issue is whether the circumstances are as described in the introduction - that is, they had an impact upon your assessment and you neither could have controlled nor predicted them. There may also be times that, due to unforeseen circumstances affecting the entire University community, other reasons may be approved by the University. The lists below are not intended to be definitive, if in doubt please speak to the HE Study team.

We do expect you to plan your studies to allow for the usual ups-and-downs of life, including minor illnesses or minor personal issues, so claims for extenuating circumstances relating to these might not be approved.

2.2 What Reasons might be approved?

Your own health problems

- mental health issues major accident or injury,
- acute conditions,
- hospitalisation (including for operations), or those affecting a significant period of study
- personal or psychological problems for which you are receiving counselling, or have been referred to a counsellor or similarly qualified practitioner
- cough/cold/sore throats or other minor illness, such as minor viral infection, only if it is incapacitating and at its peak at the time of a time-specific assessment, such as an exam, test, performance or presentation
- following NHS advice to self-isolate or otherwise restrict mixing with others, even when asymptomatic or with mild symptoms

Significant life events

- Pregnancy-related conditions and childbirth (including a partner or surrogate in labour) or adoption
- Bereavement causing significant impact
- Separation or divorce of yourself or your parents
- Weddings or civil partnership ceremonies of close family members
- Representing the College at national level or your country at international level, or participation in an event that is of benefit to the University Centre's national or international reputation.

Unexpected disruption or events

- Recent burglary, theft or serious car accident
- Jury service which cannot be deferred (if a student on a Health programme, please seek guidance from the Health Professions and Nursing team)
- For part-time students in full-time employment, exceptional pressure of work or permanent change of employment circumstances. You must submit corroborating documentary evidence (e.g. a letter from your employer) which confirms the particular circumstances, explains why they are exceptional and outside your control and formally supports your claim. If you are self-employed, you must provide independent evidence to support the claim that the pressures are exceptional and outside your control.
- Global/national events that impact you, such as terror attacks in your home city, or affecting family/friends
- Emergency or temporary measures enacted by the government such as lockdowns, limitations on movement or travel
- Serious accidents or illness affecting family/friends

Assessment issues

- Unavailability of the VLE where the module lead confirms that this would have a significant impact on your preparation for an assessment or exam
- Late diagnosis of, for example, dyslexia, meaning you have not had the appropriate support for assessment, including provision in exams □
- Disruption in an exam or assessment, such as a fire alarm going off, or excessive noise from building works

2.3 What Reasons might not be approved?

Your own time management

- You slept in or your alarm clock did not go off
- Your car broke down, or your train or bus (or equivalent) was delayed or cancelled, unless you can show that you'd made reasonable allowance for such disruption
- Misreading timetables of any kind, or time management problems, such as assessment deadlines close to each other

Life events

- Family celebrations, pre-booked holidays, house moves, or similar events, in which you either have input to or control over the date, or may choose not to participate without significant negative effects
- Appointments of any kind, including legal or medical appointments, which could be rearranged
- Minor accidents or illness affecting relatives or friends, unless you are a sole carer
- Childcare problems, or problems with similar caring responsibilities which could have been anticipated
- Financial problems, including debt sanctions imposed by South Devon College. However, cases of exceptional hardship or significant sudden changes in financial circumstances since enrolment may be considered.
- Sporting, recreational or voluntary commitments, unless you are representing the College at national level or your country at international level, or participating in an event that is of benefit to the College's national or international reputation
- For full-time students, normal pressures of employment, because, by enrolling as a student, you have made a commitment to make time available to study.

Computer problems

- Corrupt data or media
- Poor internet connectivity
- Printer failure
- E-Submissions of an assessment file in an incorrect format or of the wrong file by accident
- Re-submission of an assessment accidentally after the deadline
- Submission of an assessment file in an incorrect format or of the wrong file by accident
- Lack of access to IT facilities due to debt sanctions imposed by South Devon College

Other

- Unspecified short-term anxiety from all sources, mild depression or examination stress
- Problems with postal or other third party delivery of work

2.4 How are temporary, acute conditions considered?

If you have a temporary, acute condition, we will try to support you to complete your assessment without extenuating circumstances if possible. You should contact HEDisability@southdevon.ac.uk as soon as possible, both in terms of providing additional support for study and to put in place an appropriate arrangement to address difficulties with assessment so you can still attend or submit your assessment on time. You should not need to use the extenuating circumstance procedures, unless the support in place does not address the problem sufficiently, or other issues arise.

2.5 How do extenuating circumstances apply to long-term health conditions, including disability?

2.5.1 Disability

If you have a disability or a long-term health condition, you should refer to HE Disability based in the Student Support Hub on the Ground Floor of the University Centre or via HEdisability@southdevon.ac.uk.

HE Disability will normally be able to identify, provide or arrange reasonable adjustments for your situation, in the form of specific teaching and learning support. This is detailed in a Support Plan which is shared with you, the student, and can be shared with module leaders and also examination scheduling, if necessary.

Because these adjustments have been made before assessment, you should not need to use the extenuating circumstance provision in relation to your disability. However, exceptional issues may arise, related to your condition, which mean you require consideration beyond the adjustments already made. In this case, the Support Plan may be used as evidence to support a claim for extenuating circumstances. For extenuating circumstances unrelated to your disability, this Extenuating Circumstances Policy will apply as usual.

2.5.2 Long-term health conditions

A long-term health condition is a mental or physical condition that:

- is persistent, typically lasting for more than three months and is often lifelong
- cannot be resolved in a short time, or which will recur regardless of action, or which needs to be managed on a long-term basis
- may require you to seek help with some activities but is not otherwise disabling
- can be managed but can 'flare-up'.

If you have a long-term health condition, you should discuss any support needs with HE Disability before or soon after commencing your programme of study. It is hoped that the condition can be managed and / or you can be supported sufficiently by HE Disability.

If you subsequently experience a flare-up of the long term health condition you have told us about, which is affecting your ability to attend or complete an assessment, you must submit an

extenuating circumstances claim for the specific assessment(s). You should tell us in your extenuating circumstances claim how the flare-up is affecting your ability to complete the assessment(s) and we will support you by not asking you to provide evidence, if normally required, for every claim.

Example: A student has severe eczema that they have had since childhood. It is generally well managed with medication, however, can flare up causing significant pain and difficulty in completing everyday tasks. The student submits a Long-Term Health Condition notification form with corroborating evidence from their GP, which is approved. The student's eczema is managed during their first semester of study and the student successfully submits all assessments on time with no issues. Unfortunately, the student experiences a significant flare up the day before an examination and their skin around their hands and wrists are particularly affected. The student is unable to sit the examination so submits an extenuating circumstances claim form for nonattendance at the examination. The student does not need to submit evidence as the claim relates to their Long-Term Health. The claim for extenuating circumstances is approved.

You must inform HE Disability of any change in your condition, whether improvement or deterioration, so that your long term health status can be reassessed.

HE Disability may require further evidence from time-to time and we will contact you at the start of each academic year to review your case, to make sure you have the relevant support you need.

Example: A student has fibromyalgia and submits a Long Term Health notification form with corroborating evidence from their GP which is approved. The student's fibromyalgia is well managed during their studies and their ability to submit assessments is not impacted. The student wishes to claim extenuating circumstances as their sister is getting married on the same day as the student has an examination. The student must submit a claim form and corroborating evidence as the extenuating circumstance is not due to a flare up of their fibromyalgia.

3 How to claim for Extenuating Circumstances

If you wish to claim extenuating circumstances, you should complete the online application form available via the Extenuating Circumstances page on the [UCSD website](#). Figure 1 outlines the entire process. It is important that you fill in the form accurately and completely - we can take your circumstances into account only if you give us the right information, including the dates that the circumstances occurred and of the assessments affected.

All claims and evidence will be treated confidentially and the personal information we ask you to provide is to enable us to consider your claim for extenuating circumstances. All personal data collected in this way will be processed in accordance with current data protection legislation and will normally only be used for this purpose. The information you provide will be confidential and will normally only be shared with University staff who are directly involved in the extenuating circumstances decision-making process.

Please note, there are circumstances where our commitment to confidentiality is overridden by the following other considerations:

- When your health and safety, or that of others, is considered to be at risk
- When you are considered to be at serious risk of abuse or exploitation
- When disclosure is required by law
- When your current behaviour or health requirements compromise our responsibilities to outside agencies, including professional placements and partner institutions
- When your current behaviour or health requirements compromise our responsibilities to other students to the extent that those other students are being adversely affected to the serious detriment of their academic progress Further information can be found in the College's full [Student Privacy Notice](#)

3.1 When should a claim for extenuating circumstances be submitted?

Type of assessment	Deadline for submitting claim for ECs
Coursework	No later than 10 working days after the published deadline for submission of coursework
Presentation/Performance	No later than 10 working days after the date the presentation/performance was originally due to be delivered on
Test	No later than 10 working days after the date the test was originally due to be taken
Examination (this includes formal face to face invigilated examinations, online proctored examinations, and online time limited open book assessments e.g. those with a 48 hour window for completion)	No later than 10 working days after the date the examination was originally due to be taken

If you are still unsure when you should submit your claim for extenuating circumstances by please contact HEStudy@southdevon.ac.uk

3.1.1 Can I submit a claim for extenuating circumstances after the deadline for submitting claims for extenuating circumstances?

Claims submitted after the deadlines above will not normally be considered, unless you can demonstrate an exceptional reason why you were unable to submit your claim at the correct time, such as

- being in hospital or;
- unable to engage with the extenuating circumstances policy due to mental health issues affecting your judgement or;
- a late diagnosis of a condition which may have impacted your performance in an assessment, or your ability to engage with the extenuating circumstances at the correct time

Please note, the examples above are not an exhaustive list and you should contact hestudy@southdevon.ac.uk for further advice.

In situations such as those described above, you should normally submit your claim, and evidence as soon as you can. However, if you want to claim for extenuating circumstances after the formal publication of results at the end of the year, this will be dealt with as an appeal against the decision of an Award Assessment Board, this will be dealt with as an appeal against an academic decision affecting progression. In this scenario, you must use the appeal procedure, please see section 7 for further information.

3.1.2 Can I claim for extenuating circumstances if I become unwell during a time-specific assessment?

A time-specific assessment means an assessment that takes place in a particular time-slot, such as an examination, test, presentation, or performance.

For this type of assessment, we operate a “fit-to-sit” policy. This means that if you attempt these types of assessment, you have declared yourself fit to do so. If you think extenuating circumstances may affect your opportunity to complete these types of assessment to the best of your ability you must:

- not attend the time-specific assessment
- submit a claim for Extenuating Circumstances

If you begin a time-specific assessment, but become unexpectedly unable to continue during the assessment, you should report your circumstances to the invigilator or other person facilitating the assessment before leaving. You may submit a claim for extenuating circumstances, which, if approved, will be for non-attendance.

Please see section 4.1.4 for further information

Example: A student has a two hour examination at 2pm in the afternoon and finds out at 10am that morning that their grandmother has passed away. The student begins the examination, however, after 20 minutes realises their grief is affecting their ability to continue with the examination. The student reports this to the invigilator and leaves the examination. The student submits a claim for extenuating circumstances and the invigilator report confirms the student left the examination early as they were unable to continue due to the personal circumstances affecting them. The claim for extenuating circumstances is subsequently approved

3.2 Does evidence need to be submitted with the extenuating circumstances claim form?

3.2.1 Self-certification of short-lived circumstances, affecting you for up to five working days

If you are experiencing circumstances that affect you for up to five working days you only need to submit an extenuating circumstances claim form, you do not need to submit any evidence with it. You should clearly explain in your claim form what the issue is and how it is affecting your ability to attend or complete the assessment(s).

3.2.2. Circumstances which affect you for more than five working days

If you are experiencing circumstances that affect you for more than five working days, you must submit evidence with your claim form, unless you have previously been assessed for a long term health condition (see section 2.4.2).

You should clearly explain in your claim form what the issue is and how it is affecting your ability to attend or complete the assessment(s). The evidence submitted with your claim form should

- be independent and written by appropriately qualified professionals. Evidence from family and/or friends will not normally be accepted
- confirm the nature and timing of the circumstances, and that the circumstances were witnessed on the relevant date and not reported retrospectively
- be on headed paper, signed and dated by the author. If presented by email it should be sent by the author from the official domain name of the author's organisation
- be in English. It is normally your responsibility to arrange for any translation
- be original, if in hard copy - copies will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances

You should scan your documents and attach them with your claim form to the email you send. It is important that any evidence you submit must be unaltered. It will be deemed unacceptable if it has been amended for any reason. Please be aware, we may need to take steps to verify your evidence and may not notify you beforehand. If the evidence cannot be authenticated to our satisfaction, it may be deemed unacceptable.

3.2.2 What sort of evidence is likely to be acceptable?

Examples of evidence likely to be acceptable include:

- A medical note confirming a mental or physical health condition, provided at the time when you were suffering from that condition. Your note must be from a registered healthcare professional in good standing, such as a GP or consultant, a specialist nurse involved in your care, a psychologist, or any other recognised healthcare professional.
- A letter from a counsellor, such as the HE Counsellor or a qualified counsellor working outside of UCSD and the College, confirming a personal, psychological or emotional problem for which you have been receiving counselling. Please note that the HE Counsellor will only provide a letter of support if it has knowledge of your circumstances, and you were a client of the service during the relevant period. No student would be able to see a counsellor just in order to obtain an extenuating circumstances letter.
- An official document such as a police report including a police reference number, court summons or other legal document
- A letter from a solicitor, social worker or other official agency
- An insurance claim document supported by a letter from the insurance company.
- For part-time students in full-time employment, wishing to make a claim based on exceptional pressures in their employment, a letter from your employer that confirms the particular circumstances, explains why they are exceptional and outside your control and formally supports your claim. If you are self-employed, you must provide independent evidence to support the claim that the pressures are exceptional and outside your control.
- We may also accept evidence provided by UCSD staff, such as your personal tutor, academic staff closely involved in your pastoral care, or member of the Student Support Hub. This may be for reasons which are difficult to obtain independent evidence for, such as a family bereavement.

Please be aware that if you provide evidence which simply verifies a report you made to the person providing the evidence that you were experiencing a situation which impacted you, it will not normally be accepted.

Example: A GP provides a letter for a student explaining that the student visited their surgery in March and reported to the GP that on 8th January 2021 they were experiencing significant pain in their wrist so were unable to sit an examination that day. This evidence is not accepted as it simply confirms what the student told the GP, not what the GP observed/diagnosed themselves.

3.3 What happens if a member of a group needs to submit extenuating circumstances?

You may need to prepare assessments as a group and there may be instances where a member of your group whose ability to fulfil their role in the group is affected by their own extenuating circumstances. We expect you to have contingency plans for your group to manage members' absence, but sometimes the impact makes it impossible for the group to attend or complete the group assessment task. In this case the member of the group affected by the circumstance should submit a claim for extenuating circumstances, as described in this policy. Other members of the group may also each submit a claim, citing the absence of their group member due to extenuating circumstances as their reason for submitting their own claim. You should also discuss with the module leader or appropriate member of teaching staff whether the group may be able to carry on in this situation, to avoid unnecessary reassessment.

4 What happens when a claim for extenuating circumstances has been submitted?

Once you have submitted your claim for extenuating circumstances it will be considered by a panel. Normally the Deputy Head of Higher Education will consider straightforward claims.

The Head of Higher Education and Academic Registrar, will consider more complex and/or sensitive claims.

Each claim is considered individually and all students will be treated fairly and equitably. Decisions on whether to approve the claim will be based on whether:

- the claim was submitted on time and if not, whether evidence to demonstrate an exceptional reason for considering the claim late has been provided
- the circumstances meet the criteria of
 - Having an impact on your ability to attend or complete assessment(s) at the published/correct/usual time, and
 - Being outside of your control or you could not have reasonably predicted
- Any evidence (if required) is acceptable

Once a decision has been made, you will be notified by email to your student email address. Forms are considered as a matter of priority, however, this may take a few working days, therefore, if you have submitted a claim for an extension to your coursework deadline for a taught module **you should not wait for a decision on your claim before submitting your work.** You should submit the final version of your work within:

- five working days of the original published deadline for self-certified claims, or
- ten working days of the original published deadline for all other claims

4.1 What happens when a claim for extenuating circumstances has been submitted?

Approved extenuating circumstances will not normally change your grade (unless, for example, a claim submitted after the deadline was exceptionally approved and resulted in a penalty for a late submission being removed), but will allow you to complete or attend your assessment(s) at a time when you are not affected by the extenuating circumstances. Approved extenuating circumstances most often allow you to:

- Submit your assessment slightly later than the published deadline, or
- Not submit your assessment at the usual time, but have an opportunity to be assessed at a later date, or
- Not attend a time-specific assessment (for example, an examination, a test, a presentation or performance, or field trip), but have an opportunity to be assessed at a later date.

4.1.1 What should I do if the claim is approved for an extension for coursework?

If your claim was for an assessment on a taught module, you will normally be allowed a maximum extension of:

- Five working days from the original published deadline for self-certified claims, or
- Ten working days from the original published deadline for evidenced claims
- During the referral period an extension will be no more than five working days.

Your extension will be given to you in the email you receive when your claim has been approved, however, **you should not wait for a decision on your claim before submitting your work**. If you have already submitted your work pending the decision on your claim, any late penalty may be waived, or you may submit another version of your work if there is still time remaining during the extension.

Please be aware there may be occasions where your extension may be less than five or ten working days. These are rare and are normally if the original deadline is close to a Subject Assessment Panel where marks for assessments are confirmed.

During the referral period an extension will be no more than five working days.

Please note, if your coursework is assessed with a numerical mark and you submit your work within 24 hours after the extended deadline, your work will be capped at the pass mark. If you submit more than 24 hours after the extended deadline a mark of zero will be awarded.

4.1.2 What happens if I still cannot submit my work by the extended deadline?

If the extended deadline is in term-time and you have been unable to meet the extended deadline as you are still affected by extenuating circumstances, you must submit a further extenuating circumstances claim form, with evidence. If the claim is approved it will be for non-submission and you will normally be allowed to be re-assessed at the same attempt, please see section 4.1.4 for further information.

4.1.3 When should I submit my coursework for a taught module if the extension falls in a vacation period?

If your extension falls in your vacation period, you should endeavour to submit your coursework by the new deadline, however, if you are unable to meet that deadline, your claim for extenuating circumstances will automatically be approved for non-submission and you will not need to submit another claim form. This is because we do not normally expect you to complete academic work during your vacation periods. As your claim will be automatically approved for non-submission, you will normally be allowed to be re-assessed at the same attempt, please see section 4.1.4 for further information.

If you are unsure when your vacation period is, please check with the HE Study team.

4.1.4 What should I do if the claim is approved for non-submission or non-attendance of an assessment?

In cases such as these a zero mark for the assessment will be recorded and the Award Assessment Board will decide what action to take. Normally the Board will allow you to be re-assessed at the same attempt as the submission that your extenuating circumstances were approved. The re-assessment will take place either

- during your programme's referral period (during the summer for most programmes but do check with your Faculty if you are unsure), or
- as a repeat of the module during the next academic year if the volume of credit you have not achieved is more than what is allowed for referrals.

The mark of zero will be replaced with the mark you achieve for the reassessment. Please refer to our [Academic Regulations](#) for more information on referral and repeat.

4.2 What happens when a claim for extenuating circumstances is not approved?

If your claim for extenuating circumstances is not approved, you will receive an email giving reasons why. If you had submitted work pending the outcome of your claim, the mark you receive will be capped at the pass mark if you submitted it within 24 hours of the original published deadline (assuming the standard of your work is sufficient to warrant a pass mark). If you submitted more than 24 hours after the original published deadline, your work will not be marked, you will receive a mark of zero, and reassessment will be at the next attempt (subject to attempts remaining). If you submitted by the published deadline, the mark you receive will be the actual mark awarded and will not be capped.

5 What happens if I submit several claims for extenuating circumstances?

We want to ensure you have the best opportunity to demonstrate your academic abilities, which is why we have the extenuating circumstances policy in place. If we notice a pattern to your claims, or you submit three claims within a six-month period, this may indicate there is an underlying issue we may be able to help or support you with. We may, therefore, refer you to either the [HE Study and Wellbeing Review Policy](#) or, if your programme has a Fitness to Practise requirement, to the [Fitness to Practise and Cause for Concern procedure](#). This is so we can discuss your claims with you and put in place any additional support you may need or signpost you to other services that can help you.

6 How does the extenuating circumstances policy and procedure link to other policies/procedures?

We have a range of other services, policies and procedures that may be relevant to you such as;

- Study and Wellbeing Review Policy
- Fitness to Practise and Cause for Concern Procedure
- Supporting Pregnant Students and Students with Very Young Children Policy
- Appeals
- Academic Offences

They can be accessed at <https://www.ucsd.ac.uk/student-life/essential-information/academic-regulations-and-procedures-and-policies/> along with other supportive policies and procedures. The Study and Wellbeing Review Policy and Procedure on this page is particularly important.

7 Is there a process for appealing an extenuating circumstances decision?

You may appeal an Extenuating Circumstances decision made during the academic year on the following grounds:

- A material and demonstrable procedural irregularity in the Extenuating Circumstances process.
- Evidence that UCSD did not consider all of the information available to it at the time of its consideration of the claim.

Appeals will not be considered on the following grounds:

- Dissatisfaction with the reasonable judgment of UCSD in its consideration of the Extenuating Circumstances claim,
- Late submission of an application for Extenuating Circumstances or late submission of evidence to support an application where there are no compelling grounds for why the application was made late.

Appeals should normally be made within ten working days of the date of the email communicating the extenuating circumstances decision to you.

However, if you want to claim for extenuating circumstances for a taught module after the formal publication of results at the end of the year as described in sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2, this will be dealt with as an appeal against the decision of an Award Assessment Board. You must, therefore, submit your appeal by the deadline specified when your results are published.

To submit an appeal you must complete the appeal form and submit it, with any supporting evidence, to the Quality Office at HEcomplaints@southgdevon.ac.uk within the timeframes outlined above. Further information on the appeals procedure can be accessed at the [Academic Regulations and Policies and Procedures](#) webpage.

7.1 What happens if my appeal is upheld?

If your appeal is upheld at the Formal Stage your claim will be referred back to the Extenuating Circumstances Panel to be reconsidered. They will communicate the outcome of their reconsideration to you in writing to your student email address. You may not subsequently appeal the decision made following reconsideration of your claim and you will be deemed to have completed the University's internal procedures. If you remain dissatisfied, you may request a Completion of Procedures letter to refer your case to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

7.2 What happens if my appeal is rejected?

If your appeal is rejected at the Formal, you may apply for your appeal to be considered at the Review Stage. Further information can be accessed through the [appeals procedure](#). If the HE

Quality Office does not find you have demonstrated grounds for your appeal to be considered at the Review Stage, you will be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter to refer your case to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator if you remain dissatisfied.

7.3 What is the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)?

The OIA runs an independent scheme to review student complaints and South Devon College is a member of this scheme. If you are unhappy with the outcome of your appeal, you may be able to ask the OIA to review your case. You can find more information about making a complaint to the OIA, what it can and can't look at, and what it can do to put things right at

<https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students>

8 Flowchart of Extenuating Circumstances process (Figure 1)

