

Royal Northern College of Music

# Extenuating Circumstances

Policy & Procedure

Academic Department

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Approval Committee: Academic Board

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RNCM  
ROYAL NORTHERN  
COLLEGE of MUSIC

## 1. Extenuating Circumstances – Introduction

The College wishes to be fair to all its students and recognises that during their programme students may encounter significant personal difficulties that may have an adverse effect on their ability to study or complete assessments. The College refers to these personal difficulties as 'extenuating circumstances'.

Extenuating Circumstances may occur at any point in the academic year and affect any form of assessment. It is the responsibility of the student to report extenuating circumstances.

Postgraduate research (PGR) students who require additional time, beyond the maximum period of registration, for the purpose of making their submission or who need to interrupt their studies for medical or non-medical related reasons should consult the PGR Concessions Policy.

## 2. Grounds for Extenuating Circumstances

If a student feels that their performance in examinations or other assessments will be adversely affected by extenuating circumstances, they are **strongly advised not to take the assessment** and to submit extenuating circumstances in advance for consideration by the Extenuating Circumstance Panel. If a student takes an assessment they will have been **deemed fit to do so** and will not normally be able to submit an application for extenuating circumstances once an assessment has been undertaken. If a student is taken ill during the course of an assessment, they will be able to submit an application for extenuating circumstances.

Extenuating circumstances will, in all but exceptional circumstances, involve cases of illness or bereavement, as detailed below:

- Illness diagnosed and certified by a doctor or other appropriately qualified practitioner/counsellor;
- a recurrent or on-going medical condition (physical and/or psychological) diagnosed and certified by a doctor or other appropriately qualified practitioner/counsellor;
- Injury\* diagnosed and certified by a doctor or other appropriately qualified practitioner/counsellor;
- Evidenced bereavement of a close family member.;
- serious illness/injury in the family diagnosed and certified by a doctor or other appropriately qualified practitioner/counsellor;
- personal problems requiring medical intervention and confirmed by an appropriately qualified practitioner/counsellor.

*\* In the case of a repeat application for extenuating circumstances relating to an injury that affects a student's performance the student may be referred to a BAPAM specialist for an independent report.*

Requests for extenuating circumstances due to performance/professional commitments will not be considered under the extenuating circumstances procedure. In such cases, students should apply for an Authorised Absence; the process for which is detailed in section seven of the Student Information Handbook. Other factors that will not normally be considered under the extenuating circumstances procedure include:

- Absence of an accompanist;
- unavailability of members of an ensemble/quartet/Chamber music ensemble;
- change of recital programme;
- performance anxiety/examination stress;
- computer and information technology problems;
- study-related problems (deadline congestion, delays in printing/photocopying);

- domestic or personal disruptions (a planned house move, weddings or other events, failed travel arrangements, poor time management);
- minor ailments and conditions.

*Note: if any of the above happen unexpectedly and have had a significant impact on your studies, for example; becoming unexpectedly homeless or a close family divorce, please seek the advice of a Wellbeing Adviser in the first instance.*

For an extenuating circumstance application to be accepted, in relation to illness or bereavement, all of the following conditions must be met:

- a) sudden, serious and unforeseen circumstance; and/or acute phases of a continuing chronic illness that has been previously notified to the College in writing;
- b) was/were out of the students' control and could not have been prevented;
- c) relate directly to the timing of the assessment affected; and
- d) is/are likely to seriously impair the student's performance.

### 3. **Extenuating Circumstances Application**

Students must submit an Extenuating Circumstances Application via Moodle. Notification of extenuating circumstances should be given on this application, wherever possible before the examination or assessment in question. Where notification before an assessment is not possible e.g. sudden illness on the day, the student must contact the relevant administrator on the day and submit an extenuating circumstances form *within five working days*. This should be accompanied by written supporting evidence. If it is not possible to obtain written evidence within five working days students should notify the relevant administrator of the reason why and when evidence will be presented. If evidence is not provided within this time, the application will not normally be considered and the student will be deemed as not having submitted the work or having missed the assessment.

Dates and/ or time periods of the extenuating circumstances should be stated on the application form and the specific assessment(s) to which they refer. If the information provided is insufficient or inappropriate, students may be asked to provide further evidence.

It is highly recommended that student's engage with a Wellbeing Advisor to support the completion of the application and to access support.

### 4. **Documentary Evidence**

All applications for consideration must be accompanied by supporting written evidence, uploaded via Moodle as part of the application, from an appropriately qualified individual stating the time and duration of the illness, the impact of this illness on the assessment in question and include a clear medical opinion/diagnosis or a death certificate. A note from a doctor indicating that the student told them they were unwell and self-certification will not be accepted. The student's Head of School or tutor may provide written statement of support but this **must** be accompanied by independent verification by a suitably qualified practitioner.

Applications not accompanied by suitable written evidence will not be considered by the panel and the student will be deemed as having not submitted the work or having missed the assessment.

It is highly recommended that students who are unclear about what constitutes appropriate evidence should contact, in confidence, the Student Wellbeing Advisors prior to submitting an extenuating circumstances application.

## 5. Extenuating Circumstances Panel (ECP)

The Extenuating Circumstances Panel (ECP) shall meet prior to Boards of Examiners by correspondence or meeting, as appropriate. The ECP considers applications for extenuating circumstances and consists of the following:

Academic Registrar (*Chair*)  
Head of Undergraduate Programmes (or representative)  
Director of Performance and Programmes (or representative)  
An additional member of academic staff

### In attendance:

Student Support and Welfare Advisors  
Head of Programme Administration (or representative) (*Secretary*)

The Extenuating Circumstances Panel will have available to it, for confidential reference purposes, details of all students who have a Personal Learning Plan (PLP). In determining its recommendations, the panel will seek to ensure that no 'double counting' occurs in respect of students with a PLP who wish to claim extenuating circumstances.

## 6. Decisions of Extenuating Circumstances Panel

The Extenuating Circumstances Panel will make recommendations to the Board of Examiners as follows:

<b><i>ECP decision</i></b>	<b><i>ECP recommendation</i></b>
Extenuating circumstances accepted. Deemed to have had a material effect on the assessment	Deferred assessment opportunity - assessment mark uncapped
Extenuating circumstances accepted but deemed not to have had a material effect on the assessment	Referred assessment opportunity - assessment mark capped
Extenuating circumstances rejected. Deemed not to have had a material effect on the assessment	Referred assessment opportunity - assessment mark capped

*Note: Deferred assessment is to take the assessment as if for the first time.  
Referred assessment is to take the assessment for the second time.*

The Board of Examiners will consider no other Extenuating Circumstances, and no member of the Board is permitted to make additional representation on behalf of students.

Where there is a missing mark from the profile because of illness or other good reason the Extenuating Circumstances Panel may recommend to the Board of Examiners that a degree classification or end-of-year weighted average be calculated without the missing mark.

The Extenuating Circumstances Panel shall meet prior to Boards of Examiners by correspondence or meeting, as appropriate.

If accepted, deferred resit opportunities will be granted at specific points throughout the year. Students will be notified of the timetabled deferred assessment periods at the start of the academic year.

## 7. **Monitoring**

The Academic Registrar will keep a record of all applications considered by the Extenuating Circumstances Panel and will prepare annual statistics on applications to the Education and Quality Committee.

## **Membership and Terms of Reference**

### **EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES PANEL**

#### **Membership:**

Academic Registrar (Chair)	AR
Director of Performance and Programmes or nominee	DP(P&P)
Head of Undergraduate Programmes or nominee	HUP
Additional member of Academic Staff	XX

#### **In Attendance:**

Student Wellbeing Advisors	SWA (Initials)
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#### **Secretary:**

Head of Programme Administration (or representative)	HPA
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#### **Terms of Reference**

The Extenuating Circumstances Panel is responsible for considering applications from students with respect to medical and/or personal circumstances that may have an adverse effect on their ability to complete formal assessment(s).

1. To consider whether an extenuating circumstances application has been submitted in accordance with College procedures and is admissible for consideration by the panel.
2. To consider medical and/or personal circumstances and make decisions on requests for extenuating circumstances in respect of formal assessment.
3. To ensure that decisions regarding the acceptance or rejection of application are entirely evidence based.
4. To agree the outcome for approved applications and make recommendations to the College Board of Examiners
5. To prepare an annual report on applications considered by the Extenuating Circumstances Panel for the Academic Quality Committee.
6. To refer issues relating to quality enhancement to Learning and Teaching Committee or Academic Quality Committee for discussion as relevant.

**Frequency of meetings:** prior to Boards of Examiners by correspondence or meeting, as appropriate.

**Quorum: 75%**

#### **Reporting lines:**

The Extenuating Circumstances Panel reports to the Board of Examiners.