

GBS Malta

Extenuating Circumstances

Requests for Extensions and Deferral of Assessment

A Guide for Students

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1. Principles

Where extenuating circumstances have a **significant** effect on your ability to complete an assessment task, you may be provided with an extension or additional opportunity to complete the task, without penalty, provided that you follow the procedures below.

Handing in a piece of coursework or attending an examination acts as a declaration that you consider yourself fit to make a valid attempt at the assessment. No claim of extenuating circumstances will subsequently be accepted by GBS Malta.

If you hand in a piece of coursework (including a project or dissertation), or attempt an examination, after submitting a claim for deferral the request for deferral will be disregarded, and your work will be marked in the usual way.

2. Definitions

2.1 Extenuating circumstances are genuine circumstances, beyond your control or ability to foresee, which **seriously** impair your ability to undertake and complete an assessment task (coursework, presentation, project/dissertation, examination, etc.).

Extenuating circumstances do not excuse you from completing the assessment task. You still have to demonstrate that you have achieved the required learning outcomes

to pass the assessment and the unit overall, and meet the programme requirements for progression or award. This has to be done when extenuating circumstances no longer affect your performance.

Separate procedures apply to cases where an examination or coursework assignment is affected by exceptional circumstances for all students in your class group, cohort, etc. These may include, for example, disruption in an examination room, prolonged absence of a lecturer. Such events are managed by the Associate Dean.

2.2 An **extension** is defined as permission to hand in a piece of assessed work after the published deadline for submission, without incurring a penalty.

An extension to coursework and/or project/dissertation may be granted by the Associate Dean for no more than **four weeks** after the published deadline.

If your circumstances are such that you feel that despite being granted an extension of up to four weeks your performance will be seriously impaired, you may formally apply for a deferral of the coursework assessment. Requests for deferral are considered by the Associate Dean in consultation with your Programme Leader.

2.3 A **deferral** is defined as permission to delay a particular assessment task for longer than four weeks. This may make it unlikely, if granted, that your grades for your assessed work will be considered at the next meeting of the Assessment Board. A deferral involves a new, but equivalent, assessment task in the case of coursework. A deferred examination involves taking the equivalent examination at the next opportunity when the unit is taught; normally this would be in the following semester. The final project/dissertation may be deferred as long as it is judged that no advantage compared to other students is gained by the student.

The deferred coursework or examination will normally take place at the next offering of the unit in a subsequent semester. For a dissertation deferred beyond four weeks a deadline in the next semester will be set to allow the marked work to be considered at the next meeting of the Assessment Board.

3. Extensions and deferrals

If, due to extenuating circumstances, you consider yourself unable to meet an assessment deadline or attempt an assessment, you may submit a request for

- **An extension to a coursework deadline or**
- **A deferred attempt at the assessment (coursework or examination), to take place at an appropriate time after the meeting of the Assessment Board and in the following term/semester.**

You should consult your Programme Leader as soon as extenuating circumstances become apparent. Your Programme Leader will be able to advise you on the most appropriate course of action. It would also be a good idea to talk to administrative staff about matters that are affecting your studies and completion of assessed work so that appropriate advice and support can be provided.

If you request a deferral of assessment, and that deferral is granted, you will be required to retake the assessment at *the next opportunity*. You should be aware that you may be required to take a break from your studies in order to take the assessment

when the unit or units are next offered at GBS Malta. The financial and other consequences should be fully explored by you prior to making a request for a deferral.

4. Making a request for an extension to a coursework deadline

If you are unable to submit coursework by the specified date because of extenuating circumstances you should contact your Programme Leader **before** the published deadline to request an extension.

All applications for extension must be submitted in writing using the **Extenuating Circumstances Form** (see Annex 1). An electronic version is available from the GBS Malta website (<https://gbs.edu.mt/our-policies/>) and the VLE.

Supporting third-party evidence **must** be provided at the time of making the request for a coursework extension. **Requests submitted after the coursework deadline will not be considered.**

On the application form you are asked to indicate how long an extension you think you will need. GBS Malta is not bound to accept your estimate of the extra time you say that you need.

You must submit your completed extenuating circumstances application form to your Programme Leader for consideration. The Associate Dean may grant an extension of up to four weeks, *as long as your mitigating circumstances are backed up by third party independent evidence.*

If the request for an extension is approved you will be given a new submission date. Provided you hand in your coursework on or before the new submission date, you will not incur any penalty.

Work submitted after the new extension hand in date will not be marked and attract a fail grade.

5. Making a request for deferral of an assessment

If you want to request a deferral of coursework assessments or of an examination you should discuss the matter with your Programme Leader, so that extenuating circumstances and consequences of deferral can be fully considered.

All applications for deferral must be made in writing, **before** the due date of the assessment task. This must be done using the **Extenuating Circumstances Form** (ECF). In exceptional circumstances, such as on the day the coursework should be submitted, you may call your lecturer or administrative staff at GBS Malta if you are prevented from handing in your work, for example, due ill health, an accident or personal injury. In such cases a form will be completed on your behalf, but you will need to provide independent evidence as soon as possible after the incident. If you do not provide independent evidence, you will be judged to have not submitted your work and a fail grade will be recorded.

Requests for deferral should always be made as close as possible to the time of your extenuating circumstances and before the date of the examination or due date of the coursework. Applications for deferral will not be accepted after the coursework deadline or date of the examination, except where you can show that circumstances beyond your control and independently evidenced prevented you from contacting GBS

Malta in this period. Where more than one assessment is affected the application for deferral must be made before the first assessment task.

Your application for deferral of an assessment task must clearly state when your extenuating circumstances occurred and which assessments are affected. The application form asks you to describe your extenuating circumstances and how they have or would impair your performance in the assessment task. You must include all relevant facts at the time of application (see Section 6 below).

Supporting third party, independent evidence **must** be attached to the Extenuating Circumstances Form (ECF) (see Section 7 below). If your extenuating circumstances are of an exceptionally sensitive or personal nature, you may request that only your Programme Leader consider your request. In such cases you must place your evidence in a sealed envelope marked 'confidential: from (your name)', addressed to your Programme Leader with the completed form attached.

If your application for deferral is accepted this will be confirmed to you by email by your Programme Leader. You will be notified of the assessment tasks that have been deferred and the date(s) by which you must attempt the assessment again. You will be required to take the assessment 'at the next opportunity'.

If your application is refused you must attempt the assessment otherwise an absence will be recorded, and you will forfeit your right to a referral and may jeopardise your place on the programme.

If extenuating circumstances affect a further assessment opportunity, you must make another application for deferral for the period concerned. This could simply confirm that your earlier circumstances have continued, but it must be accompanied by new third party evidence covering the new period.

6. How much information do I need to provide?

You must include all relevant facts. **Your application for extension or deferral may be rejected if you fail to complete the details concerning the units(s) and assessed component(s) for which you are requesting extension or deferral.**

You must ensure that you provide the specific submission date and/or examination date and clearly identify the assessment or examination. You must state the date from which the extenuating circumstances affected your studies, and the date that you were able to resume your normal pattern of studies. These dates must correspond with any information provided in your third party evidence. **You must also make sure that you explain the impact that these circumstances have had on your performance.**

7. What evidence do I need to provide?

Requests for an extension or a deferral can only be made through submission of a fully completed Extenuating Circumstances Form. GBS Malta will not consider any request for coursework extension or deferral by any other means.

Requests for extensions or deferral must be accompanied by supporting evidence, normally from an independent third party. You are advised to keep a copy of any evidence you submit to GBS Malta appreciated that in some cases it is difficult to produce independent, supporting evidence, however lack of third party evidence will weaken your application.

If you miss an assessment deadline or examination due to illness or are affected by illness on the day the assessment is to be handed in, you must seek medical attention on the day, and you must submit documentary evidence. The evidence must relate to the time of the illness. And must make it clear that you were medically unfit to take the examination. Retrospective medical certificates and doctor's notes stating that you claim to have been unwell may not be accepted. Medical evidence must bear the medical doctors's stamp, and/or be on appropriate letter-headed paper.

Please note that some doctors may charge a fee for providing you with medical certification. GBS is liable to pay this fee on your behalf.

Examples of other third party evidence that might be acceptable in support of non-medical circumstances may include:

- A letter from a close family member concerning, for example, bereavement accompanied by a copy of the death certificate, if possible.
- A letter from someone who has been providing non-medical support, such as a counselor.

If you knowingly submit false or forged evidence, you will render yourself liable to disciplinary proceedings.

8. Valid and invalid circumstances

8.1 Examples of circumstances that might be considered valid

- Hospital, including operations
- Long-standing health problems
- Personal or psychological problems for which the student is undergoing counseling or has been referred to other qualified practitioners
- Chronic illness
- Childbirth (including a spouse/partner in labour)
- Bereavement causing significant impact/effect
- Major accident or injury, acute ailments or conditions which coincide with an assessment deadline, examination date, or are sufficiently long-lasting to impact on a significant part of the semester
- Recent burglary, theft or serious car accident
- Separation or divorce – student or parental (provided facts are independently corroborated)

The above list is not intended to be exhaustive but provides the most common types of extenuating circumstances that may be acceptable.

8.2 Examples of circumstances that would not be considered valid

- Alarm clock did not go off
- Car broke down, train/bus delayed, or other public transport problems
- Childcare problems which could have been anticipated
- Pregnancy (unless specific complications)
- Accidents or illness affecting relatives or friends (unless very serious or the student is the sole carer)
- Unspecified anxiety, mild depression or examination stress

- Cough, cold, sore throat, minor viral infection, unless the illness was at its peak at the time of the examination or deadline and can be supported with medical evidence
- Financial problems
- Holidays, house moves, family celebrations or other events the student either has control of or may choose not to participate in
- Computer problems, corrupt data, printer failure, etc.
- Problems with postal delivery
- Time management problems (for example, competing deadlines)
- Appointments (legal, medical, etc.) which could be rearranged
- Sporting or recreational commitments
- Social activities such as parties, visits by friends

The above list is not meant to be exhaustive and should be taken as an indication of the types of circumstances that would not be acceptable as extenuating.

If there was some kind of disruption in an examination, such as excessive noise, poor lighting, noise from other students, such conditions will be reported to your Programme Leader. Account will be taken of any such disruptive examination conditions at the appropriate Assessment Board.

9. How are extenuating circumstances judged?

In considering your case your Programme Leader will normally determine whether the extenuating circumstances cited by you are genuine circumstances beyond your control or ability to foresee, and which are likely to seriously impair your assessed work. In considering your request account will be taken of:

- The severity of the problem
- The length of time the problem lasted
- The closeness in time of the circumstances to the assessed task(s)
- The supporting evidence

10. Action that GBS Malta can take

Extenuating circumstances cannot be used as a reason to raise grades, waive pass requirements of individual units, reduce the requirements for progression, or raise the classification or overall grade for an award.

If GBS Malta does decide that your application is valid, you will be granted an extension or permitted a deferral so that you can take the assessment at the next opportunity. A deferred assessment, whether coursework or examination, will be marked as a first attempt, in which case the assessment will be awarded a mark reflecting its full academic worth.

If your request is refused, you must attempt the assessment. If you do not make an attempt an absence will be recorded. This will mean that the assessment will count as a failed attempt and may result in you failing the module overall. You will not be eligible to resubmit the failed assessment(s).

If you do not take the deferred attempt at the appropriate time, an absence will be recorded for the assessment(s) concerned and this will count as a failed attempt.

GBS Malta has the right to reject applications for extension and/or deferral of assessment tasks that do not relate in time to the assessment concerned or are not supported by adequate third party evidence.

11. Data Protection

In submitting an application request for an extension or deferral on the grounds of extenuating circumstances you are agreeing to GBS Malta holding this personal data for the purposes of processing and deciding on the request.

12. Unauthorised late submission of coursework

Work submitted late (where an extension or deferral has not been granted) will automatically attract a mark of zero. This will count as a failed attempt and may result in you failing the module overall. You may be eligible for a referral of the failed assessment(s) subject to GBS Malta's regulations on reassessment. The maximum grade that can be awarded for resubmission or referral work is a pass mark.

For students who have been granted an extension for coursework, if work is submitted after the expiry of the extension, this will automatically attract a mark of zero or fail. This will count as a failed attempt and may result in you failing the module overall. You may be eligible for a referral or resubmission of the failed assessment(s) subject to GBS Malta's assessment regulations (<https://gbs.edu.mt/our-policies/>). The maximum mark that can be awarded for resubmission work is a pass grade.

13. Summary

- Requests for extensions and deferrals of assessment tasks can only be made by submitting a completed Extenuating Circumstances Form (ECF).
- Only those designated in the above procedure are authorised to grant extensions or deferrals.
- The Associate Dean may grant an extension for up to four weeks for individual students providing the ECF plus supporting third party evidence is submitted and the submission is deemed valid.
- For extensions for coursework beyond four weeks a deferral request is required. Deferral of an examination or coursework can only be granted by the Associate Dean in consultation with your Programme Leader. The Associate Dean must deem the ECF and supporting third party evidence to be valid in order to grant an extension.
- Blanket extensions for a class or all students on a unit or units may be granted by your Programme Leader for up to one week.
- Unauthorised late submission of coursework will attract a grade/mark of zero/fail and be counted as a failed attempt. Where the student is deemed eligible for a referral a maximum pass grade only can be achieved.

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