

FIT TO SIT POLICY AND EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES



Self-certification process is only in operation for *Coursework Extension Requests* and *Deferral Requests*.

Self-certification is not in operation for the University's appeals procedures. Therefore, self-certification will not be accepted in relation to Academic Appeals (Awards and Progression) Procedure, Academic and Non-Academic Misconduct Appeals, Fitness to Practise Appeals and Fitness to Study Appeals. The expectation is that any students using these processes will provide supporting evidence as required by, and detailed in, the *Academic Regulations*, *Fit to Sit Policy* and associated forms.

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1. FIT TO SIT

- 1.1 The University operates a *Fit to Sit Policy* which means that if you undertake an assessment then you are declaring yourself well enough to do so.
- 1.2 The University's *Academic Regulations* require students to attend timetabled assessments and to submit work for assessments within the notified timescale and in accordance with the conditions for the course/module. [[Regulation A3 – Section 1: Academic Appeals \(Awards and Progression\) Procedure](#)]. However, the University recognises that illness or other valid circumstances can impact on a student's ability to submit and/or attend an assessment. The University's *Fit to Sit Policy*, therefore, incorporates provision for extenuating circumstances.

- 1.3 It is your responsibility as a student to ensure your School is informed of any extenuating circumstances, such as illness or other valid circumstances, which might prevent you from undertaking an assessment or is impacting on your ability to prepare for the assessment.

2. WHAT ARE EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES?

- 2.1 Extenuating circumstances are **exceptional, serious, acute and unforeseen problems or events** which genuinely affect your preparation for an assessment or your ability to undertake the assessment and/or submit a coursework on time, and which were outwith your control.
- 2.2 In the normal course of life you may occasionally experience minor illness, unexpected or adverse events which coincide with the preparation of coursework assignments or examinations. It is essential to recognise that these are part of normal life experience and that it is expected that some difficult circumstances have to be managed in addition to your studies. Such circumstances do not in themselves excuse failure or a poor performance. **You are expected to manage and organise your learning, coursework assignments and revision in a way which anticipates that events will not always run smoothly.**
- 2.3 It is important that you keep an academic member of staff fully informed of any difficulties **at the time at which they occur**. With early warning of a problem it may be possible for your School to provide support which will make a claim of extenuating circumstances unnecessary.
- 2.4 Many students believe they can cope with these exceptional, serious, acute and unforeseen problems or events and, as a result, do not keep their School informed of these issues and fail to complete the *Coursework Extension Request Form* or the *Deferral Request Form*. By the time they realise they have not coped, it is too late to submit either *Form* and the assessment results have been considered by the Assessment Board. Do not make the same mistake. If you are experiencing difficulties which are impacting on your ability to submit or sit an assessment then complete the *Coursework Extension Request Form* or the *Deferral Request Form*.
- 2.5 The University recognises many problems or events may be very personal and private, and that you may be reluctant to disclose them to a member of University academic staff. It is essential that you do, and the University will ensure the information is not disclosed unnecessarily. Remember, though, it is your responsibility to complete and submit the *Coursework Extension Request Form* or the *Deferral Request Form*. Members of staff will not do this for you.

2.6 Specifically, the following are normally considered as extenuating circumstances:

- Serious or significant medical conditions or illness (including both physical and mental health problems).
- Extraordinary personal circumstances (e.g. serious illness or death of an immediate family member, guardian or close friend, including participation in funeral and associated rites; being a victim of significant crime).
- Extraordinary travel circumstances beyond your control which prevented you from attending an examination or other scheduled assessment.
- Ailments such as severe colds, migraines, stomach upsets, etc., ONLY where the ailment was so severe it was impossible for you to attend an examination.
- Pregnancy, maternity, paternity or adoption related leave.
- Unexpected illness during an invigilated examination which impacts on your wellbeing to the extent that you are unable to continue with the examination. Also refer to section 6.2.

This list is not exhaustive.

3. WHAT ARE NOT ACCEPTED AS EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES?

The following are examples of circumstances **NOT** considered in mitigation:

- Claims made outwith permitted timescales.
- Circumstances which have already been fully catered for by the granting of a coursework extension.
- Poor time management or personal organisation (e.g. failure to plan for foreseeable last-minute emergencies such as computer crashes, printing problems or travel problems resulting in late submission of coursework; misreading the examination timetable).
- Minor ailments such as colds, headaches, hangovers, etc.
- Long term illness or disability where special arrangements have already been made for your assessments (or where such arrangements could have been made if you had made the University aware of the problem at the proper time). Also refer item 5 below.
- 'Bunching' of examinations or coursework deadlines.
- Problems caused by English not being your principal language. You should seek advice in good time from the Study Support Centre or the English Language Tutor.

- Circumstances within your control (e.g. family wedding or holiday; paid employment; getting a cheaper flight; choosing to miss an assessment or coursework deadline for something considered more important).
- Lack of awareness or understanding of the University's published *Academic Regulations* and procedures.
- Lack of access to University facilities as a result of an unpaid debt to the University.

4. WHAT IS ACCEPTABLE EVIDENCE?

- 4.1 Evidence is normally key to the consideration of extenuating circumstances. However, following the COVID-19 pandemic, the University is continuing to operate **self-certification** in relation to *Coursework Extension Request Forms* and *Deferral Request Forms*. Therefore evidence **is not required** for these forms.
- 4.2 Evidence **will be required** in relation to *Academic Appeals*, *Misconduct Appeals*, *Fitness to Practise Appeals* and *Fitness to Study Appeals*.
- 4.3 It is important that when completing the *Coursework Extension Request Form* or *Deferral Request Form* you make clear the **impact** that the extenuating circumstances have had on your ability to prepare for assessments and/or undertake the assessments.

Academic Appeals, Misconduct Appeals, Fitness to Practise Appeals and Fitness to Study Appeals

- 4.4 When you submit an *Academic Appeal*, *Misconduct Appeal*, *Fitness to Practise Appeal* and/or *Fitness to Study Appeal* you **must** provide independent, verifiable, objective supporting evidence such as a copy of a death certificate or other related document, a police crime number notification, a court summons, a letter of confirmation from your Personal Tutor, Site Warden or other appropriate third party evidence in order for the claim to be deemed as valid. Claims without such evidence will not normally be considered. It is your responsibility to organise and provide supporting evidence. The University will not request evidence on your behalf.
- 4.5 Supporting evidence can also be obtained from the University's Counselling Service. To be eligible for this you must either be, or have been, a client of the Service and have engaged in a counselling contract at the time of the illness. The Counselling Service cannot produce a letter relating to this event if you have not required previous contact with the University's Student Counsellor.
- 4.6 Likewise, supporting evidence can be obtained from your General Practitioner (GP) (medical doctor) or a qualified health practitioner. To be eligible for this you must have

attended the practice at the time of your illness. Medical certificates must be specific about the nature of the illness and must include a clear diagnosis. Retrospective evidence will generally not be accepted.

- 4.7 Students studying on-campus in Aberdeen are encouraged to register with a local medical practice. If an overseas medical certificate is submitted then it must be on official letter-headed paper with the relevant stamp of authority. If the medical certificate is not in English then it must be accompanied by a translation by an official translation service. Any costs incurred for the translation will be the responsibility of the student.
- 4.8 If, during an invigilated examination, you notify an invigilator that you have become unwell and are unable to continue, then this will be recorded by the Invigilator and you must refer to this in Section 4 of the *Deferral Request Form*.

① **Unacceptable evidence:** Photographs of physical injuries, skin conditions, bodies and/or funeral services **are not appropriate evidence and will not be considered** if submitted with an appeal.

5. WHAT ABOUT LONG TERM ILLNESS OR DISABILITY?

If you have a long term illness or disability then you should have notified the University of this condition to ensure that any special arrangements have been implemented, as appropriate, to accommodate it. Such conditions can only be considered as mitigation if there is demonstrable evidence the condition deteriorated during the specific period relating to your assessment.

6. HOW TO REQUEST EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

There are two routes through which extenuating circumstances can be claimed:

6.1 Coursework Extension Request

If you are seeking an extension to a submission deadline then the *Coursework Extension Request Form* must be completed and submitted through your **RGU email account** to your School **at least 24 hours prior to the submission date and time**. Your School's email address can be found at www.rgu.ac.uk/academicregulations. Claims submitted within, or after, 24 hours of the submission date will **not** be considered.

You will receive an automated receipt of your email which you must retain for your records.

6.2 Deferral Request

The *Deferral Request Form* should be used for the following circumstances:

- (i) **Non-submission of an assessment:** If you are claiming extenuating circumstances in relation to non-submission of an assessment then the *Deferral Request Form* must be completed and submitted through your **RGU email account** to your School at the designated email address, which can be found at: www.rgu.ac.uk/academicregulations. The completed form must arrive no later than 5 working days¹ after the date of the assessment submission deadline.
- (ii) **Non-attendance at an examination:** If you are claiming extenuating circumstances in relation to non-attendance at an examination then the *Deferral Request Form* must be completed and submitted through your **RGU email account** to your School at the designated email address, which can be found at: www.rgu.ac.uk/academicregulations. The completed form must arrive no later than 5 working days after the date of the examination.

Exceptionally, if you unexpectedly become unwell during an examination to the extent that it impacts on your wellbeing and you are unable to continue with the examination then you must notify the invigilator immediately and prior to departing the examination. If you wish your examination to be deferred, i.e. for the examination script not to be marked, then a *Deferral Request Form* must be completed and submitted through your **RGU email account** to your School at the designated email address, which can be found at: www.rgu.ac.uk/academicregulations. The completed form must arrive no later than 5 working days after the date of the examination.

❗ *Deferral Request Forms* received after the five working day period will not be considered.

Refer to [section 9](#) below for the outcomes of a *Coursework Extension Request* and a *Deferral Request*.

7. WHAT HAPPENS TO MY REQUEST?

7.1 Your *Coursework Extension Request* will be considered by the School.

¹ For the purposes of the *Fit to Sit Policy* and the *Academic Regulations*, "working days" refer to Monday – Friday.

7.2 Your *Deferral Request* will be considered by an Extenuating Circumstances Panel which makes a recommendation to the Assessment Board for your course.

8. WHAT WILL BE THE OUTCOME OF MY REQUEST?

8.1 *Coursework Extension Request*: the School will decide if the request is valid, i.e. submitted within the required timescales, and if it is then a new submission deadline will be agreed and details of the new date will be issued to you in writing.

8.2 The length of the new deadline will be decided on the individual merits of each case.

The period for an extension shall not normally extend beyond five working days.

Only exceptionally shall an extension be granted beyond five working days and normally for no more than 10 working days.

Only in very exceptional circumstances would an extension be granted beyond 10 working days. Normally any student seeking an extension beyond 10 working days shall be directed to the *Deferral Request* process.

8.3 *Deferral Request*: The following table indicates the possible outcomes of valid/invalid requests:

Circumstances	Request Invalid	Request Valid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Non-submission of an assessment 	Non-Submission (NS) recorded and the submission will count as one of your normal assessment opportunities.	An 'M' will be recorded. The assessment will not be counted as an assessment opportunity and another assessment opportunity will be offered and will be taken at the next scheduled assessment occasion.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Non-attendance at examination 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Unwell during an examination 	The work will be marked and will count as one of your normal assessment opportunities.	The work will not be marked and an 'M' will be recorded. The assessment will not be counted as an assessment opportunity and another assessment opportunity will be offered and will be taken at the next scheduled assessment occasion.

- 8.4 It is your responsibility to determine whether your circumstances warrant applying for **either** a *Coursework Extension Request* or a *Deferral Request*. You may find it helpful to consult with your Course Leader or Personal Tutor for further guidance. Where a student has received an extension to their submission date then no further extension shall be permitted for that particular submission and the student would either be expected to submit on the agreed deadline or use the [Academic Appeals \(Awards and Progression\) Procedure](#) after the Assessment Board. Only in very exceptional circumstances would a *Deferral Request* be accepted on an extended submission date.

9. NOTIFICATION OF THE OUTCOME

- 9.1 *Coursework Extension Request*: the new submission date will be issued to you in writing by the School.
- 9.2 *Deferral Request*: the School will advise you of the provisional outcome of your Deferral Request. All outcomes remain provisional until confirmed by an Assessment Board. The confirmed outcome of your claim will be reflected in your assessment results when they are released to you following consideration by the Assessment Board.

ⓘ Please be aware that only authentic claims will be considered and the University's [Academic Regulation A3: Section 2 Student Conduct Procedure](#) may be applied should there be any doubts about the authenticity of the claim.

ⓘ Data Protection Statement

The Robert Gordon University is a data controller under the *Data Protection Act 1998*. The personal data you provide with this form will be kept on your student file for monitoring purposes and the data will be anonymised and used for statistical purposes. The data will not be transferred to third parties. All personal data will be processed according to the Data Protection Principles and in line with the University's [Data Protection Policy](#).