



University of  
St Andrews

## Extension guidance – FAQ

<b>Document type</b>	<b>Policy</b>
<b>Scope (applies to)</b>	Staff and students
<b>Applicability date</b>	18/10/2023
<b>Review / Expiry date</b>	18/10/2027
<b>Approved date</b>	03/03/2025
<b>Approver</b>	Proctor's Office
<b>Document owner</b>	Administrative Officer
<b>School / unit</b>	Education and Student Experience
<b>Document status</b>	Published
<b>Information classification</b>	Public
<b>EDI review/Equality impact assessment</b>	None
<b>Key terms</b>	Academic policies/Student progression/Academic adjustments
<b>Purpose</b>	Guidance

<b>Version number</b>	<b>Purpose / changes</b>	<b>Document status</b>	<b>Author of changes, role and school / unit</b>	<b>Date</b>
2	Last three points added as approved by Senate	Updated	Administrative Officer	24/5/2024

## **Extensions Guidance FAQs**

### **What are extensions?**

The University recognises that unforeseen circumstances can impact on a student's ability to submit an assignment by the submission deadline. An extension is a form of academic adjustment. It is a process by which a student may receive additional time to complete their coursework. It may be an option for students where circumstances have significantly affected a student's ability to prepare for, or submit, an assignment. Requests for extensions should be made to the relevant School/Department at the point at which extenuating circumstances arise, and in advance of the submission date. The length of the extension granted is at the discretion of the School/Department.

### **Overarching rules for extension requests**

- The University expects students to note assignment submission dates and to abide by these dates as far as they are able.
- Extensions can be offered for extenuating circumstances and as a reasonable adjustment for students who have a disability support plan in place that includes the provision for flexible deadlines.
- Extensions must be requested prior to the deadline. Retrospective extensions will only be awarded in highly exceptional circumstances.
- Extensions requested outside of working hours will not be responded to until work has resumed.
- It is the responsibility of the student to alert their School/Department of the need for additional time.
- Extensions are granted at the School/Department's discretion. Depending on the reasons given, extensions may not always be granted, or a period shorter than the one requested may be granted. It is very important that students try as much as possible to submit their work on time as an extension to one deadline may impact other assessment submission dates.
- Further extension requests on already extended deadlines are not normally considered unless there are new unforeseen circumstances. Where these exceptional circumstances occur, a further extension request is required according to the School's procedure.
- Where a student submits multiple requests over time for similar reasons, and the School/Department believes that there are longer-term impacts on the student's capacity to engage, the student will be referred to Student Services before further extensions are approved.
- Students are asked to respect this supportive process by requesting extensions only where there are genuine reasons to do so. Students are reminded that dishonest use of self-certificates is a serious disciplinary matter.

## **What are extenuating circumstances?**

Extenuating circumstances are unforeseeable or unpreventable circumstances that are likely to have a material impact upon a student's academic performance and/or ability to engage with their studies. Extenuating circumstances are difficulties which are usually sudden and unanticipated. Extenuating circumstances which impact students for longer than 10 days should be discussed with Student Services in the first instance, they may refer the student to the relevant Associate Dean or Associate Provost. Flexible deadlines are a different category of circumstance, and depending on the underlying condition, may result in multiple extension requests (see section on flexible deadlines below).

## **What are self-certificates?**

Self-certificates for absence are online forms, which are accessible through MySaint/MMS. When a student experiences extenuating circumstances resulting in an inability to engage with classes or complete assignments, they must submit a self-certificate for each class/assignment affected by the extenuating circumstances. It is particularly important that students account for absence in compulsory classes. Submission of self-certificates will be considered when assessing extension requests but do not guarantee that an extension request will be approved.

## **What are reasonable grounds for extenuating circumstances?**

- Medical circumstances that relate to the assessment period
- Personal family circumstances (e.g., close family bereavements, emergency caring responsibilities)
- Jury service
- Exceptional unforeseeable issues
- Attendance at employment or internship opportunities (if pre-approved by the School)
  - Please see the extenuating circumstances policy <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/policy/academic-policies-student-progression/extenuating-circumstances.pdf>

## **What are NOT grounds for extenuating circumstances?**

- Medical circumstances that do NOT have an impact on the assessment period
- Holiday or family events
- Failure to make adequate back-ups of electronic data (a basic procedure and skill)
- Failure of personal computers (University PCs are available throughout the estate for students' use)
- Inadequate preparation for the assessment
- Conflicting assessment deadlines
- Underestimating the time required to complete the assessment
- Demanding roles in student societies
- Missing a class related to the assessment
- A change in another deadline caused by a previous extension request

## **With respect to extensions for extenuating circumstances, what support can students expect from Student Services?**

Student Services will always ask the student who believes that they require an extension to contact their School in the first instance about their extenuating circumstances. Where the student requires Student Services to support their request for an extension due to the extenuating circumstance, Student Services may request to meet with the student to discuss their situation, either online or in-person. As with Academic staff, Student Services Advisers follow the current extenuating circumstances policy. They will support students where there is evidence of significant involvement of Student Services or a third-party partner, such

as the NHS or a private counsellor, during the semester, and where this involvement has clearly been to address the extenuating circumstance. Student Services do not make any final decision about extensions, nor do they grant them. However, the Student Services Advisers will always aim to support a student's self-advocacy and wherever appropriate, share information about the student's circumstances to support the School to decide about an extension.

### **What are flexible deadlines?**

The University recognises that the effects of long-term physical health, sensory, cognitive, or mental health conditions may present obstacles to meeting assignment deadlines. Students who have long-term conditions should consult with the Disability Team to discuss support options. **'Flexible Deadlines'** may be recommended in their support plan as a reasonable adjustment. For instance, where a student has a disability characterized by cyclical acute episodes, providing flexible assignment deadlines and opportunities to catch-up on academic work can reduce pressure and remove disadvantage. Where flexible deadlines are recommended in a support plan, Schools are expected to consider requests for extensions without the need for detailed explanation to justify the adjustment.

### **How do flexible deadlines impact the granting of extensions?**

When flexible deadlines are authorised on a student's support plan by Student Services, students must still submit an extension request for each assignment requiring an adjustment, following the School's procedure. While the inclusion of flexible deadlines in the support plan removes the requirement for a comprehensive explanation regarding the need for an extension, a student should still mention the reason for the extension when providing further detail of the need for mitigation. The extension request must be submitted before the deadline. The length of extension is determined by the type of assessment, lead time and impact on other assignments. Disabled students are generally aware of how much additional time they would need to complete an assignment e.g., a student who has cystic fibrosis requiring in-patient hospital care may need an extension commensurate with the time spent in hospital. In cases where repeated requests for flexibility are being made or an extension longer than the normal flexible deadline is needed, contact with the Disability Adviser in Student Services is required to assess the appropriate reasonable adjustment for the student.

### **When may extensions not be granted for students who have flexible deadlines as part of their support plan?**

- Where meeting the deadline is a genuine competence standard e.g. lab work submission that is cumulative or completing a professional skills competency task.
- Where further flexibility is requested **WITHOUT** supporting information that demonstrates a deterioration in wellbeing or interaction between disability disclosed and other life events. In these cases, contacting the Disability Adviser in Student Services for more details would be appropriate.
- Assignments that hold significant importance in the overall educational experience of students in the class e.g. collaborative group work or participation in discussion boards. An alternative assignment can be considered in exceptional cases.
- Retrospective requests for flexible deadlines are not normally granted unless there are exceptional circumstances (e.g. a hospital admission).

### **What factors will be considered when deciding on the length of an extension?**

- The nature and gravity of the disclosed personal circumstances
- The nature of the assessment and the preparation time
- Self-certification and medical evidence where relevant
- The knock-on implications for subsequent assessment deadlines on the module, and on other modules that the student is taking within the School where the extension is requested.

### **What mitigations can be put in place for group work?**

Requests for extensions associated with group work are unlikely to be approved, except in exceptional circumstances, due to the disruption caused to the whole group. When no other solution is available, the extension should be applied to the whole group. Where this is not possible, an alternative assessment for the student who has mitigating circumstances should be assigned.

### **When should Schools liaise on an extension decision?**

Where students request extensions of 7 days or more from multiple Schools, those Schools should discuss the student case and where an extension is approved, they should agree on a common extension timeframe. Where liaising Schools cannot agree on an extension decision even with the input of Student Services, they should contact the Associate Deans/Provost (Students) to help find a resolution.

### **Can a third party submit a request on a student's behalf?**

Yes, in exceptional circumstances, a third-party can contact a School to request an extension on a student's behalf. This would normally be a student's next of kin.

### **Can you appeal an extension decision?**

Appeals including those made under the permissible grounds of extenuating personal circumstances materially affecting academic performance of which the University was not aware when the academic decision was taken and which could not reasonably have been disclosed by the student, are governed by the University policy on Student Academic Appeals <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/students/rules/appeals/policy/>

### **What coursework penalties can be applied to work when an extension is not sought or granted?**

All Schools are required to publish deadlines (date and time) for the submission of assessed work as well as the penalties to be applied for work that is submitted late. The penalty scheme in each School is devised according to the nature of the module and the particular assignment. Every day of the week counts towards a late penalty. This rule applies to all holidays (public and University) and includes weekends, with Saturday and Sunday each counting as one day.

Where work is marked to the 20-point scale, the following lateness penalty schemes are available as outlined in the Coursework Penalties Policy:

- A. 1 mark per day, or part thereof
- B. 1 mark per 8-hour period, or part thereof
- C. Initial penalty of 3 marks, then a further 1 mark per additional 8-hour period, or part thereof

Where work is marked to some other scale, the following variants apply:

- A. 5% of the maximum available mark per day, or part thereof
- B. 5% of the maximum available mark per 8-hour period, or part thereof
- C. Initial penalty of 15% of the maximum available mark, then a further 5% per 8-hour period, or part thereof

In conjunction with one of the available penalty schemes, a cut-off period may also be specified, after which a mark of zero will be awarded. At the School's discretion, such work may still be assessed for credit. Schools may operate stricter penalty schemes, including 100% penalty for any unjustified lateness, for assessments that by their nature need to take place at a particular time. Examples include oral presentations and interviews.

In cases where, due to School teaching arrangements, the application of the Coursework Penalties Policy would disadvantage some students relative to others, the Assistant Vice Principal (Dean of Learning & Teaching) may authorise the use of minor variations of these schemes. Please see the Coursework Penalties Policy <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/policy/academic-policies-assessment-examination-and-award-coursework-penalties/coursework-penalties.pdf>

## **When is medical evidence required for an extension?**

Medical evidence is required for illness of 5 working days or more. To relieve pressure on the NHS, medical evidence is not required for illnesses of less than 5 working days, but students should self-certify for illness of this type. Evidence is essential for longer-term mitigations such as extensions of longer than 5 working days.

Medical evidence is NOT required where the request relates to a disability covered by flexible deadlines.

Where medical circumstances affect more than one assessment on a given module in the semester, or multiple modules over a period of longer than 5 consecutive working days or 10 non-consecutive days, students must consult Student Services for support to approve additional adjustments.

Medical evidence is required if circumstances affect multiple assessments and multiple modules over time.

Where required, medical certificates should be issued by a medical practitioner or suitably qualified professional. The Money Team can provide support if a student struggles to pay for a medical letter.

The University reserves the right to make enquiries to establish the authenticity of this evidentiary documentation.

## **How should extension requests from students impacted by caring responsibilities be considered?**

A carer is defined as anyone who looks after a family member or friend. This may be as a parent or may be those in a caring role for a person due to old age, addiction, disability, physical or mental illness. Students with caring responsibilities may be affected by unforeseen events which impact those they care for and consequently have a knock-on effect on their ability to engage with their studies. Such unforeseen events may be difficult to evidence. Where unforeseen circumstances affect carers on more than one assessment on a given module in the semester, or multiple modules over a period of longer than 5 consecutive working days or 10 non-consecutive days, students must consult Student Services for support to approve additional adjustments. Evidence is required if circumstances affect multiple assessments and multiple modules over time.

## **When may extensions be granted to students who are negatively impacted financially and/or negatively impacted by employment pressures?**

Attending University is a costly investment, and many students may be unable to meet the full costs of living without part-time employment. Students should be cognisant that 60 credits over the course of a semester equates to a full-time workload and additional part-time paid employment will need to be organised to prioritise classes and assessment deadlines.

Students who face financial pressures should reach out to the Money Advice Team and <https://www.yourunion.net/support/cost-of-living/> for information and support.

We understand that students in paid employment may be affected by unforeseen events that impact their employment and have a knock-on effect on the student's ability to engage with their studies. Such unforeseen events which impact on a student's studies in the short-term may be difficult to evidence, but we encourage students to proactively seek support for extension requests from their School(s) or support for wellbeing from Student Services in relation to financial or employment pressures.

Where unforeseen circumstances affect students on more than one assessment on a given module in the semester, or multiple modules over longer than 5 consecutive working days or 10 non-consecutive days, evidence is required. In such circumstances, students must provide clear evidence

to their School as part of their request to approve additional adjustments. Students may need support from Student Services to discuss their situation and to support their request for an academic adjustment where Schools request more information.

<b>Version number</b>	<b>Purpose / changes</b>	<b>Document status</b>	<b>Author of changes, role and school / unit</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	New document – approved by ESMG	Updated	Administrative officer	19/10/2023
2	Last three points added as approved by Senate	Updated	Administrative Officer	24/5/2024