



ZCAS UNIVERSITY

EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

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GENERAL POLICY INFORMATION

<i>Policy Name</i>	<i>Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedures</i>
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<i>Owner</i>	<i>Deputy Vice Chancellor - Academic</i>

1.0 DEFINITION OF EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

1.1 What are Extenuating Circumstances?

1.1.1 ZCAS University defines extenuating circumstances as situations which may:

- i. impair students' performance in any assessment, or
- ii. prevent students from attending any assessment, or
- iii. prevent students from submitting assessed work for assessment by the due date.

Such circumstances rarely occur and would normally be:

- i. unforeseeable in that students could have no prior knowledge of the event concerned, and/or
- ii. unpreventable in that students could do nothing reasonably in their power to prevent such an event, and are
- iii. expected to have a serious impact on performance

1.2 Valid Examples of Extenuating Circumstances

1.2.1 The University considers the following situations as examples of valid extenuating circumstances:

- i. **Bereavement** – death of a close relative/significant (*of the nature which, according to Sections 39 and 40 of the Employment Code Act No. 3 of 2019, would have led to an absence in accordance with the compassionate leave regulations*)

- ii. **Illness** (*of the nature which, according to Sections 39 and 40 of the Employment Code Act No. 3 of 2019, would have led to an absence in accordance with the compassionate leave regulations*)
- iii. **Significant adverse personal/family circumstances** (*of the nature which, according to Sections 39 and 40 of the Employment Code Act No. 3 of 2019, would have led to an absence in accordance with the compassionate leave regulations*)
- iv. Other **significant exceptional factors** for which there is evidence that performance will be impaired.

1.3 Invalid Examples of Extenuating Circumstances

1.3.1 Examples of circumstances which the University shall **not** regard as valid extenuating circumstances are stated in **Appendix 1**.

2.0 POLICY STATEMENT

Recognising that students may sometimes encounter serious uncontrollable circumstances which adversely affect their academic performance, ZCAS University has developed this Policy and Procedure on Extenuating Circumstances (ECs). The University is committed to ensuring that every student facing extenuating circumstances is given the opportunity to be assessed fairly and demonstrate their true level of academic performance. Students who have been affected by extenuating circumstance shall put forward their extenuating claims for consideration and be granted an appropriate assessment, extension or examination upon having their cases approved. The University shall consider each extenuating claim on its own merits and in accordance with the relevant procedure outlined herein. This Policy and Procedure shall apply to all ZCAS University programmes of study and any collaborative provision for which there are no specific alternative arrangements with partner institutions.

3.0 POLICY OBJECTIVE

The document outlines the Policy and Procedures University staff and students shall follow when students experience circumstances which adversely impact on their performance. The Policy and Procedure shall achieve the following objectives:

- i. make clear the types of serious adverse factors that the University shall consider as extenuating circumstances;

- ii. ensure that students are appropriately supported by their Schools when extenuating circumstances are brought to the attention of Schools in a timely manner;
- iii. ensure that all students are treated fairly and equitably in the light of extenuating circumstances;
- iv. outline the responsibilities of students in informing the University of circumstances which are affecting their performance; and
- v. protect the integrity of programmes for all students.

4.0 SCOPE

This Policy is an institution wide and therefore its provisions apply to all the programmes offered at the University exceptions where there are agreements to the contrary.

5.0 REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES

5.1 Application Forms for Extenuating Circumstances

- 5.1.1 Students wishing to make their claim for extenuating circumstances shall use the standard EC Form (**see Appendix 2**) which they can download from the website (www.zcasu.edu.zm) or obtain from Student Administration Office and complete it.
- 5.1.2 Students shall submit the completed EC Form to their respective Dean's Office in person or by email within the specified time as provided for in section 7.1.3.

5.2 Evidence Required for Extenuating Circumstances

- 5.2.1 For EC applications to be considered, they must be accompanied by certified documentation of valid evidence of those circumstances. Such evidence shall normally be by an independent third party such as medical professional, counsellor, the police and lawyers.
- 5.2.2 Supporting evidence from relatives or other students shall not be deemed as valid. A statement from a personal tutor shall be helpful, but it shall not be considered as sole evidence in itself.
- 5.2.3 Students who feel that their extenuating circumstances are too sensitive to share are strongly advised to seek support from the University Student Counsellor who is qualified to help.

5.2.4 The types of evidence which the University shall normally accept as valid is herein attached as **Appendix 3**, and students who are unsure about the validity of the evidence are strongly advised to consult their School before submitting their claim.

5.3 Reporting Extenuating Circumstances

5.3.1 It is a responsibility of every student to inform the School of any circumstance which may affect their ability to meet programme commitments by submitting an EC Form with valid evidence to the Dean of School.

5.3.2 In reporting extenuating circumstances, students shall specifically request a deadline extension (in case of an assessment) or a deferral (in case of an examination). Merely submitting the EC Form stating the student's problems shall not automatically result in a rearrangement of an assessment deadline or examinations.

5.3.3 Students wishing to report their extenuating circumstances shall do so **at least five (5) working days** in advance of the assessment deadline or within 48 working hours before the examination date except in emergencies such as hospitalisation, incarceration or equivalent physical or mental incapacity.

5.3.4 If students are unable to gather the evidence required to support their application, they shall proceed to submit the extenuating circumstances Form, stating the basis for the claim and clearly indicating why they could not provide the evidence at that time. Such students may normally be allowed up to five (5) working days to submit the evidence.

5.3.5 The Examinations Committee shall meet every semester to consider the claims for extenuating circumstance relating to final examinations while the respective schools shall resolve claims affecting other assessments.

5.4 Retrospective Claims and Late Submission of Extenuating Circumstances

5.4.1 The University shall not consider any claim made late or retrospectively, except in exceptional circumstances, where the submission was due to cases such as hospitalisation, incarceration or other physical or mental incapacity.

5.4.2 Where the most exceptional cases mentioned in 7.1.3 and 7.2.1 above are applicable, students shall be required to submit their claim **within five (5) working days** after the

assessment deadline or date of the examination. The students shall submit a statement which details the reason for the lateness in addition to the EC Form, and such statements must be substantiated with evidence and will follow the normal requirements for relevant evidence.

5.5 Authorised Leave of Absence or Interrupting of Studies

- 5.5.1 Students who believe their extenuating circumstances require them to be absent for a period exceeding **fifteen (15) working days** shall discuss their circumstances with the Dean of School and consider interrupting their studies or applying for Leave of Absence.
- 5.5.2 If Absence of Leave will result in the student missing a scheduled assessment and/or an examination, the student shall accordingly submit the EC Form.
- 5.5.3 Student requesting for Leave of Absence shall submit their application as early as possible in advance but **not later than five (5) working days** before their departure date except in the case of unexpected emergencies.
- 5.5.5 As with the application for extension of assessment deadlines or examination deferrals, approval of Leave of Absence is at the discretion of the Dean of School. Approval of Leave of Absence/withdrawal with permission shall, however, be guided by the Refund Policy

5.6 Consideration of Extenuating Circumstances

- 5.6.1 The Examinations Committee and School Boards of Examiners considering students' claims for extenuating circumstances shall take into account the following:
 - i. timeliness of the submission;
 - ii. seriousness of the matter to qualify as extenuating circumstances;
 - iii. validity of the documentary evidence presented;
 - iv. weighting of the assessment that will be affected by the circumstances, consult with lecturers, Heads of Department, student administration or other staff, on any other issues or concerns, as appropriate.
- 5.6.3 The School shall ensure maintenance of accurate records on extenuation circumstances.

5.7 Decisional Outcomes involving Assessments

5.7.1 School Board of Examiners considering cases in respect of assessment other than final examinations shall come to one of the following decisions:

- i. reject the claim on grounds of insufficient evidence;
- ii. reject the claim on grounds that the request is made due to an insubstantial event that does not qualify as valid extenuating circumstance;
- iii. provide an extension to the deadline of assignments;
- iv. rearrange the assessment for a later date in respect of in-class tests, in which case a different test shall be set in order to ensure the integrity of the assessment;
- v. authorise absence from lectures, laboratory classes, seminars, workshops and tutorials, where participation contributes to assessment;

5.8 Decisional Outcomes involving Examinations

5.8.1 Examinations Committee considering cases in respect of examinations for extenuating circumstances shall come to one of the following decisions:

- i. reject the claim on grounds of insufficient evidence;
- ii. reject the claim on grounds that the request is made due to an insubstantial event which does not qualify as valid extenuating circumstance;
- iii. reject the claim on grounds of not meeting submission deadline;
- iv. approve an examination deferral, in which case the student shall sit the next deferred examination; and
- v. approve that a student exceptionally repeats the previous part or year of study in cases where the candidate's circumstances are so severe that they have not had the benefit of formal tuition during the period.

5.8.2 If a deferred examination is awarded, the student shall be required to pay the prevailing deferred examinations fee.

5.9 Notification to Students

5.9.1 The secretaries of the two Committees i.e. School Boards of Examinations and Examinations Committee shall communicate the decision of the relevant Committee to affected students.

5.9.2 In the case of rejection, the secretaries' communication of notice to students shall contain a brief statement confirming reason(s) for the rejection.

5.9.3 The respective secretary shall notify the affected students via an email sent to the student's registered email account within **three (3) working days** after a decision is made.

5.10 Appeal Against the Outcome

5.10.1 Students have the right to appeal against the outcome of Extenuating Circumstances claim coming from the Examination Committee to the Vice Chancellor. Such appeals must be submitted **within five (5) working days** of the outcome of the extenuating circumstances decision being communicated to the student.

5.10.2 In the case of decisions made at School level, students have the right to appeal against such outcome to the Deputy Vice Chancellor – Academic and thereafter, Vice Chancellor. Such appeals must be submitted **within five (5) working days** of the outcome of the extenuating circumstances decision being communicated to the student.

5.10.3 The format of the Appeal is a letter or email, fully detailing the grounds for appeal, a copy of the application and outcome correspondence.

5.10.5 The process to resolve student appeals shall be guided by the principles of openness and best practice whereby the University shall disclose to affected students any relevant case documentation at an early and appropriate stage and, in particular, in advance of any determination of the outcome.

5.10.6 Following the conclusion of the student appeals:

- i. if the appeal is rejected, the office handling the appeal shall inform the student in writing; and
- ii. if the appeal is accepted, the office handling the appeal shall guide on the next course of action.

6.0 FRAUDULENT CLAIMS

6.1 The University shall consider the submission of a fraudulent request for extenuating circumstances to be taken into account as an attempt to gain unfair advantage and,

therefore, claims, which are deemed to be fraudulent, shall be referred to the Examination Irregularities Committee of Senate for consideration and, where appropriate, it shall be investigated in accordance with the academic misconduct procedures.

7.0 QUALITY ASSURANCE AND MONITORING

7.1 Assurance of quality and standards in the management of claims for extenuating circumstances shall include the following:

- i. devising of the extenuating circumstances Policy and Procedure in consultation with the students, and having it approved by Senate;
- ii. ensuring that all staff involved are suitably trained, supported and monitored so that consistency and fairness is maintained;
- iii. ensuring that the Policy and Procedure is published and clearly understood by students and staff;
- iv. ensuring that all applications are resolved promptly, consistently and effectively;
- v. ensuring that accurate records of all the claims and the outcomes are maintained for internal or external scrutiny, as may be required;
- vi. reviewing the Policy and Procedure periodically to ensure that it is fit for purpose and, where necessary, recommending changes, as required, to be approved by Senate;
- vii. monitoring the consistency of decisions and submitting an annual report to Senate;
- viii. detailing the number of extenuating circumstances applications submitted and their outcomes, the number of appeals received and the outcomes and any other issues relating to the principles or procedures.

8.0 COMPLIANCE

All stakeholders should implement or support the implementation of this policy and comply with the provisions thereof. Any breach or failure to comply with the policy shall be dealt with in accordance with the various policies and regulations of the University or applicable laws.

9.0 REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every three years or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this policy and procedure refers.

10.0 RELATED POLICIES

This Policy shall be read together with relevant policies and documents including the following policies:

1. Examination Management Policy and Procedures
2. External Examiners Procedures and Guidelines
3. Student Admission Policy and Procedures
4. Quality Assurance Policy

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Examples of Invalid Extenuating Circumstances

The University shall **not** regard the following circumstances as falling within the relevant definition of extenuating circumstances and is unlikely to accept them:

- i. Statement of a medical condition without reasonable evidence (medical or otherwise) to support it;
- ii. Medical circumstances outside the relevant assessment or learning period;
- iii. Medical condition supported by ‘retrospective’ medical evidence – that is, evidence that is not in existence at the same time as the illness, e.g. a doctor’s note which states that the student was seen (after the illness occurred) and declared they had been ill previously;
- iv. Long term health condition for which the student is already receiving reasonable or appropriate attention (in accordance with *Sections 39 and 40 of the Employment Code Act No. 3 of 2019*);
- v. Minor illness or ailment, which in a work situation, would be unlikely to lead to absence from work;
- vi. Paid employment, although exceptions may be made where an employer makes additional and unforeseen demands on an employee e.g. sending an employee overseas at short notice;
- vii. Transport problems e.g. missed bus or train, lateness of lift;
- viii. Personal computer/printer problems;
- ix. Claims that students were unaware of the dates, times, format of submission for coursework and venues for exams or practical assessments;
- x. Poor time management – for example, the magnitude of the assessment task, or failure on the part of the student to perceive or act upon the magnitude of the assessment task;
- xi. Complaints against staff or in relation to delivery of the course or programme. These are managed through the available Complaints Procedure of the University;
- xii. Stress and panic attacks caused by exams that are not diagnosed as an illness; and
- xiii. Foreseeable or preventable circumstances;

Appendix 2: Extenuating Circumstances Form



EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES FORM

SECTION A

Please complete this form with reference to the Policy and Procedure on Extenuating Circumstances

Full Name:	Student Number:
Programme:	Year of Study:
School:	Mode of Study:

Assessment affected:

Course Code	Type of assessment affected	Assessment date/deadline	Request being made: e.g. <i>Extension/ Deferred Exam/ Leave of Absence/ interrupting of studies</i>

Date of circumstances
Start: _____ End: _____
List of independent Evidence attached:

Declaration: I confirm that all information completed on this form is honest and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I confirm that I have read and understood the Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedures.

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

SECTION B: OFFICIAL USE:

<u>DEAN</u> Decision: Approved ☐ Disapproved ☐ Comment:	<u>DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR (in case of appeal)</u> Decision: Approved ☐ Disapproved ☐ Comment:
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Appendix 3: Examples of the Types of Evidence Normally Accepted

Examples of valid extenuating circumstances	Suggested sources of evidence
Bereavement (<i>of the nature which, according to Sections 39 and 40 of the Employment Code Act No. 3 of 2019, would have led to an absence in accordance with the compassionate leave regulations</i>)	Death certificate Burial permit
Illness (<i>of the nature which, according to Sections 39 and 40 of the Employment Code Act No. 3 of 2019, would have led to an absence in accordance with the compassionate leave regulations</i>)	Medical certificate, hospital admission notice, Letter (or similar) from medical professional or other relevant independent professional
Serious adverse personal/family/work circumstance - This would include cases where a student's spouse/ parent/ child is affected (<i>of the nature which, according to Sections 39 and 40 of the Employment Code Act No. 3 of 2019, would have led to an absence in accordance with the compassionate leave regulations</i>)	Letter (or similar) from employer or other independent professional Medical certificate, hospital admission notice,
Other significant exceptional factors for which there is evidence of stress caused	Letter (or similar) from counsellor, therapist, medical professional or other independent professional



28th March 2024

Prof. Douglas Kunda

Date

VICE CHANCELLOR/Senate Chairperson