

## The University of Bradford Counselling & Mental Health Service

### Providing evidence to support extenuating circumstances: information and guidelines

#### What are Extenuating Circumstances, as defined in the University's policy?

These will normally be exceptional circumstances beyond the student's control which cause them to perform **significantly** less well, in coursework or examinations, than might have been expected on the basis of performance in other work.

This means that there needs to be:

- **'Good cause'** which has prevented a student from attending required assessments or from completing a particular assessment.
- **Ill-health** or other form of **adverse circumstances** which may have led to significant impairment of a student's performance in an assessment;

For example:

- suffering a serious illness or injury
- an unexpected change in, or impact of, a disability
- the death or critical illness of a close family member
- a significant family crisis leading to acute stress
- absence arising from jury service, maternity, paternity or adoption leave

In general, extenuating circumstances will be of a medical or personal nature affecting the student for a **significant** period of time and/or during the examination period.

Please see the [University of Bradford Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure](#) for a fuller definition and more guidance.

## **Counselling and Mental Health Service Policy**

Where appropriate, Counsellors or Mental Health Advisors will provide a standard letter in support of extenuating circumstances where those circumstances interfered with the student's ability to focus on academic work and ***where the student has clearly endeavoured to manage with our help.***

The following points contain information and guidelines about when we will provide this:

- The Counsellor or Mental Health Advisor needs to be confident that they are in a position to make a judgement that the issues that the client has disclosed to them have seriously affected his or her ability to meet course requirements.
- In order to make this kind of a judgement, the Counsellor or Mental Health Advisor needs to have a clear awareness and understanding of the client's difficulties.
- Generally, this means that the student has attended at least one 50-minute counselling appointment (not just a 25-minute intake appointment), or that they have attended at least one 50-minute intake appointment with a Mental Health Advisor.
- ***Providing evidence of this kind for a client needs to come as a result of the counselling or mental health advice and not be the purpose of it.***
- Letters will only ever be provided at the student's request and with the student's permission. They will normally be shared directly with the student by email.
- The Counsellor or Mental Health Advisor will provide a standard letter which does not go into any specific details.
- Any extenuating circumstances letter sent by the Counselling and Mental Health Service will state the number of sessions and dates attended.
- Even if a Counsellor or Mental Health Advisor has seen a student for several appointments, s/he may not feel that providing this kind of evidence is appropriate.
- For postgraduate research students we provide letters confirming extenuating circumstances to support requests for suspension/extension of study.

## **Confirmation of attendance**

In certain circumstances we may provide letters confirming attendance at the Counselling and Mental Health Service. However, the provision of a letter confirming attendance is not, in itself, proof of an extenuating circumstance.

## **Confirmation of fitness to study**

We do not provide evidence confirming fitness to study. This can only be provided by a medical professional.

## **For further information and advice about Extenuating Circumstances:**

- University guidance: [Student Life information about extenuating circumstances](#)
  
- Contact the Counselling and Mental Health Service:
  - [counselling@bradford.ac.uk](mailto:counselling@bradford.ac.uk)
  - [mhadvice@bradford.ac.uk](mailto:mhadvice@bradford.ac.uk)
  - 01274 235 750
  
- Contact the Disability Service:
  - [Main Disability website](#)
  - [Disability FAQ page - for students](#)
  - [Disability FAQ page - for staff](#)
  - [disabilities@bradford.ac.uk](mailto:disabilities@bradford.ac.uk)
  - 01274 233739
  
- Contact the Students Union
  - [UBU Main Website](#)
  - [Information about Extenuating Circumstances](#)
  - [Extenuating Circumstances Guidance](#)
  - [ubu-advice@bradford.ac.uk](mailto:ubu-advice@bradford.ac.uk)