



Chapter 3

Deferral of assessment on grounds of extenuating circumstances

The assessment of work is an important milestone in a Student's academic career. Assessments have to be scheduled for certain times during the University year, but the University accepts that it is possible that, in exceptional occasions, an individual Student's performance may be seriously impaired by severely adverse personal circumstances. In such cases, it is fair to defer the assessment until a later time and/or to disregard the mark awarded if the Student completed the original assessment at a time when their performance was seriously impaired by adverse personal circumstances.

Where a shorter-term issue has arisen, it may be appropriate to consider requesting an extension to a coursework deadline. Where a Student may be experiencing significant and long-term adverse personal circumstances, it may be appropriate to consider a complete break from studies – Leave of Absence. Information on extensions and Leave of Absence can be found in the Taught Programmes Academic Regulations, section 5: [Academic regulations and assessment boards \(dmu.ac.uk\)](https://www.dmu.ac.uk/academic-regulations)

1 Notes

- 1.1 Deferrals should not be seen as an opportunity for Students to request deferrals in assessments of their choice to enable them to improve on their performance at the next sitting. Normally the University would expect deferrals due to on-going circumstances to be for all assessments in the period affected by the circumstances on which a deferral request is made.
- 1.2 The deferral of assessments alone is not an adequate measure to ensure DMU's compliance with the Equality Act, and in addition to considering the deferral request Students should be informed to contact the DAS or MHIT (as appropriate).
- 1.3 It should be noted that even Students who have adjustments in place may need to request deferrals because many health conditions vary in their impact and are difficult to plan for.
- 1.4 Students are expected to take deferred assessments at the next available opportunity as per the instructions from their Faculty.



- 1.5 Extenuating circumstances will not be considered by the University after a Student's marks (and/or award) have been verified by an Assessment Board and officially released to the Student.¹
- 1.6 A deferral only covers the person named on the deferral acceptance letter. If an individual is granted a deferral on a piece of group work this does not automatically mean that others in the group are granted the same deferral, as deferrals are considered and granted on grounds of exceptional circumstance specific to the individual student. If other members of the group also need to defer their work they must make their own deferral application.

2.5 Criteria for considering requests for deferral

The Student must provide time relevant evidence of circumstances relating directly to a stated assessment or assessments and provide this with the deferral form within published Faculty deadlines (see paragraphs 3.13 and 3.1.14) The purpose of this procedure is not to unnecessarily put barriers in the way of Students achieving their full potential. The reason for considering evidence is to avoid Students who wish, on a clearly fraudulent basis, to defer assessments. In order to demonstrate that the circumstances fulfil the definition of genuine circumstances beyond a Student's control or ability to foresee, which seriously impair their assessed work, they must demonstrate the following degree of seriousness:

- Serious illness or death of a member of the immediate family; which can be, but not limited to a parent or guardian, child, brother, sister, spouse or partner.
- An episode of a serious debilitating illness involving an authorised absence from study of at least three weeks, for example Students with mental or physical health conditions who may have a period of time when they are unable to perform as effectively.
- A serious accident or acute illness occurring immediately before or at the time of the assessments concerned.
- An acute or sudden change to a long-term condition.
- Jury service.
- Other unforeseen circumstances, of equivalent weight, that have seriously disrupted the ability to study, for example the need to act as a carer or care for a very ill child over a number of weeks.

[It is recognised that the standard of the evidence produced will often be beyond the direct control of the Student, and decisions will be made on the balance of probabilities, taking into account all the evidence at hand.]



2.6 Circumstances such as the following would not be acceptable to the Panel:

- Minor illness (such as a cold), manageable illness or indisposition, or injury not falling within the definition of serious debilitating illness or serious accident, or acute illness as stated above.



- 3.1.3 It is the Student's responsibility to obtain the evidence required to allow the Panel to reach a decision. The University will require time relevant third-party evidence to support the Student's own claims for deferral. The Student is responsible for attaching documentary evidence to, and submitting it with, the request form, simply providing contact details of third parties is not acceptable. Retrospective medical certificates will normally only be accepted if the Student consulted the doctor at the time of the illness and this is stated by the doctor on the certificate.
- 3.1.4 In relation to examinations, it is expected that any evidence submitted from a doctor or other health, or social care professional will contain a clear professional opinion that the illness/condition cited will affect the Student's performance on the date of the examination(s) concerned. A letter stating that a Student reported (to the doctor) that they were unable to attend an

- 3.1.11 In exceptional circumstances, if a Student has been unable to submit coursework or attend an assessment, they may use self certification to accompany an application under the deferral process if they are unable provide any other form of timely evidence.
- 3.1.12 Self-certification may only be used once, during each programme registration period (a period determined by the programme start date). If a Student continues their education at De Montfort University and registers on a further programme of study, their entitlement will be re-set. It may be used to cover one or more assessments which are due to be submitted or taken in the same assessment period.
- 3.1.13 The Student has the right to submit supporting evidence in confidence. It is normally in a Student's interests for extenuating circumstances to be discussed by the full Panel. However, it may be that a Student wishes supporting evidence of an exceptionally sensitive or personal nature to be seen only by the Chair of the Panel. If so, the supporting evidence must be sent in a separate confidential email: from (Student's name) and addressed to the Chair of the appropriate Panel, clearly marked 'Extenuating Circumstances'. Alternatively, a password protected document may be submitted electronically.
- 3.1.14 The Chair of the Panel will read the confidential evidence and inform the Panel, at its meeting, that confidential evidence has been received. The Chair will give the Panel his or her opinion on the seriousness and relevance of the evidence but will not disclose the material without the permission of the Student.
- 3.1.15



Students on undergraduate programmes:

- Requests for deferral of formal examinations must be submitted the Faculty Student Advice Centre.
- Requests for deferral of coursework and faculty-based tests (such as phase tests) must be submitted to the Faculty Student Advice Centre.

Students on taught postgraduate programmes:

- Requests for deferral of formal examinations and assessments must be submitted to the Faculty Student Advice Centre.
- Requests for deferral of coursework must be submitted to the Faculty Student Advice Centre.

3.2 Rights and responsibilities of University Staff

3.2.1 The Faculty Student Advice Centre is responsible for issuing a receipt, normally via email to the Students University email address as evidence of submission of requests from all Students for deferral of exams, coursework and faculty-based tests.

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4.2.5 If the Student has already completed the assessment(s) for which deferral



6. Attendance at examinations and other scheduled tests

- 6.1 Whenever a Student is absent from an examination or other scheduled test it is in their own interests to inform the relevant tutor as soon as possible of any extenuating circumstances which prevented attendance, and to submit a request for deferral, if appropriate.
- 6.2 Where a request for deferral is not granted in the case of unauthorised absence from an examination or other test, a mark of 0 is awarded for that examination or test.
- 6.3 Students are individually responsible for making adequate arrangements to ensure that they are able to attend examinations or other scheduled tests, and must make do allowance for unusual circumstances which can reasonably be anticipated. A Student who is prevented from attending an examination or other scheduled test by exceptional and unforeseeable weather conditions should immediately contact the Student Gateway for guidance on the relevant procedure.

7. Professional Body requirements

- 7.1 In cases where professional bodies so require, the consideration of requests by Students for deferral of assessment will be undertaken by (i)1 (s)1 (w)1 (i)1 3rway