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*Cork Education and
Training Board*

QUALITY ASSURANCE

QA 6.7 EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES RELATING TO ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES PROCEDURE

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PURPOSE

In the interest of fair and consistent assessment of learning Cork ETB operates a strict deadline policy. However, from time to time there may be extenuating circumstance that impact on a learner ability to complete an assessment.

The purpose of this procedure is to outline how learners can apply to defer an assessment activity (i.e. complete the assessment on another occasion) in the case of temporary, exceptional circumstances that prevents them from undertaking a specific assessment activity at that time. The term deferral will be used throughout this procedure to encompass both extensions and deferrals.

SCOPE

This procedure applies to all further education and training provision provided by Cork ETB campuses and centres or by organisations funded by Cork ETB to provide further education and training, whether accredited or unaccredited.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Coordinators¹ are responsible for:

- making information regarding applying to defer assessments due to extenuating circumstances available to learners either in hard copy or digitally
- managing the application process confidentially

¹ The term Coordinator is used as a general term to indicate the person responsible for coordinating this course. This may be a designated course coordinator in some centres, a Training Centre Assistant Manager, Principal or Deputy Principal, Adult Literacy Organiser, Community Education Facilitator, BTEI Coordinator, Resource Worker, Director of Adult Education, a community partner organisation.

- making fair decisions based on the impact of the extenuating circumstances on the learners' ability to perform the assessment activity
- informing the principal/campus/centre manager

Assessors are responsible for:

- ensuring that learners are aware of this procedure
- liaising with the coordinator with regard to making a decision regarding deferral
- marking deferred assessment against the award standard in the normal way, irrespective of the extenuating circumstances

The learner is responsible for:

- keeping up to date with relevant assessment deadlines and consequences for missing same
- familiarising themselves with Cork ETB assessment procedures

In cases of exceptional circumstances that prevent a learner from completing an assessment activity they should apply in writing to defer the assessment activity and provide the appropriate evidence to support their application.

If the learner is unhappy with the decision of the coordinator, they can appeal this decision to the principal/campus/centre manager within five working days of the decision using [QA6.7b](#).

PROCEDURE

6.7.1 What are Extenuating Circumstances

In relation to assessment, extenuating circumstances are exceptional conditions that temporarily prevent a learner from completing an assessment activity or that would seriously impair a learner's performance in an assessment.

Extenuating circumstances must:

1. be unexpected
2. be beyond the learners' control
3. have a significant impact on an assessment performance

These are some possible examples of extenuating circumstances:

- a physical injury or emotional trauma during a period four to six weeks previously
- a physical disability or chronic or disabling condition such as epilepsy, or other incapacitating illness of the learner
- recent bereavement of close family member or friend
- severe accident
- terminal illness of a close family member
- serious medical problems (either physical or mental)
- if you are a victim of serious crime
- transport difficulties such as an accident
- legal proceedings requiring your attendance
- a widespread IT issue e.g. system shut down, which can be verified by an outside agency
- if you have been advised to self-isolate by a medical professional (must be verified by either a letter or screenshot of text message from the HSE)
- other extenuating circumstances

The following are examples of what are **not** extenuating circumstances:

- where a learner has a disability or a specific learning requirement this should be catered for under **QA 6.6 Reasonable Accommodation in assessment of learners with specific needs** unless there is a change in circumstances during the year, which could be classified as extenuating circumstances
- minor illnesses or being under the influence of substances
- poor time management
- examination nerves or self-diagnosed stress

- the failure of a non-cloud-based storage system e.g. breaking of a memory stick

6.7.2 Application Procedure

When a learner wants to apply to defer an assessment activity due to extenuating circumstances, they should:

- notify their assessor
- complete [6.7a – Application to defer an Assessment Activity due to Extenuating Circumstances](#) and submit their application to the course coordinator. The application be submitted in hard copy or digitally. In the case of a digital copy, signature may be typed, and the digital copy should be accompanied by the email from the learner submitting the application or should be submitted to the coordinator using Microsoft Forms/Google Forms

In certain programmes a learner may require support to complete this application. An application should be submitted no later than two weeks after the date of the assessment activity.² A learner can use one application to apply for deferrals in a number of assessments if the same circumstances apply to a number of assessments.

The application should be completed with a view to providing sufficient information for a coordinator to make a fair decision and it must be supported with written evidence. A medical certificate must be attached to the application when applying because of ill-health.

Learners should be confident in the knowledge that Cork ETB staff will treat personal information in the strictest confidence and will not disclose information in any way beyond what is required to deal with a claim.

² In exceptional cases, the coordinator may extend this date due to the specific circumstances that may prevent the learner from obtaining the relevant evidence/documentation within the allowed timeframe.

6.7.3 Decisions relating to assessment deferral due to extenuating circumstances

Cork ETB aims to provide fair and consistent treatment of all learners. It is essential that Cork ETB academic standards are not undermined by any action or provision in relation to extenuating circumstances. The coordinator needs to find a balance between ensuring that (a) the learner is not unfairly disadvantaged because of exceptional circumstances and (b) ensuring that the learner does not gain significant advantage when compared with other learners.

Coordinators should liaise with the relevant assessor regarding whether to grant or refuse a deferral due to extenuating circumstances. In deciding, the coordinator should consider the severity of the circumstances and the nature of the assessment activity and mode of assessment in making their decision, their decision must be based on the impact on the learner to complete an assessment, not the impact of the extenuating circumstances on the individual. The decision must be documented in [QA6.7b. Outcome of application deferral of assessments due to Extenuating Circumstances](#) This should be available for internal verification and external authentication.

6.7.4 Follow on from decision

The learner is informed in writing using email, post, or face to face delivery of hardcopy, of the outcome of their application within seven working days. Where approval for a deferral of an assessment activity is not granted the assessment can be completed in the normal way, if the timeline permits, and any penalties for late submissions will apply.

When approval is granted the revised schedule for the assessment activity is agreed between the assessor and the learner. Every attempt to facilitate this in the current assessment period will be made. However, due to time constraints, and/or resources, this revised schedule may roll into a subsequent certification period.

In the case of deferred examinations, a different examination paper must be used. In the case of a deferred skills demonstration, a different brief should be used where possible.

Opportunities to defer an assessment activity are dependent on the nature of the activity and the practical and/or operational issues involved. It is acknowledged that there may be specific constraints on centres that prevent them from offering rescheduled assessment opportunities to learners.

The assessor should mark the assessment according to the normal criteria without making allowances for the extenuating circumstances of the learner.

The assessor should make [QA6.7b Outcome of application for deferral of assessments due to Extenuating Circumstances](#) available for internal verification and external authentication.

Decisions can be appealed in writing to the principal/campus/centre manager within one week of the learner being notified of the decision. Where possible the centre should ensure that the learner is guided to pastoral care, counselling, or support as appropriate.

DOCUMENT DETAILS

Title:	QA 6.7 – Cork ETB Extenuating Circumstances relating to Assessments and Exams Procedure
Authors:	Cork ETB Assessment Working Group
This Version Number:	3.0
Approval	Cork ETB FET Strategy Group
Status:	Active
Effective Date:	September 2023
Review Date:	April 2025 or as required
Templates/Resources:	QA 6.7a – Application to defer Assessment(s) due to Extenuating Circumstances QA 6.7b – Outcome of application for deferral of Assessment(s) due to Extenuating Circumstances



6.7a – Application to defer assessment(s) due to Extenuating Circumstances

Please complete this form, if you wish to apply for a deferral of assessment(s) due to extenuating circumstances.

Please see your learner handbook for further information on this procedure.

Learner Name:			
Centre/College/Campus:			
Course/Class Group:			
Components and codes:			
Assessment Type(s): (mark X where appropriate)	Examination	Project	
	Skills Demonstration	Learner Record	
	Assignment	Collection of Work	
Assessment Title(s):		Due Date:	
Details of extenuating circumstance preventing assessment completion			
Please state the type of supporting evidence you are providing			
Learner Signature:			
Date:			



6.7b – Outcome of application for deferral of assessment(s) due to Extenuating Circumstances

The following outcome was decided for this application based on successful/ unsuccessful extenuating circumstances in line with section 6.7 of Cork ETB Quality Assurance Policy.

Learner Name:			
Class/Code:			
Component(s) and codes			
Assessment Type(s): (mark X where appropriate)	Examination Skills Demonstration Assignment	Project Learner Record Collection of Work	
Assessment Title(s):		Due Date:	
Assessment details:			
Applied for:	Extension Deferral		
Details of extension or deferral of assessment activity:			
Decision	Successful	Unsuccessful	
Details of unsuccessful decision			
Appeal contact person			
Approved by Principal/Centre Manager/Course Co-ordinator	Name:	Role:	
Date:			



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