

Motion to support changes to the regulations for 'Acceptable/Unacceptable Extenuating Circumstances'

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This Union Notes:

1) Students must normally submit mitigating evidence no later than seven days after the deadline for submission of coursework or the date of the examination. Submissions by staff or by other students on behalf of a student who has not presented a written case him/herself cannot be accepted. Retrospective medical certificates and notes submitted seven days after the deadline will not normally be considered. This includes those suffering from the death of parent, child, siblings, spouses or partners where the only acceptable evidence is a death certificate.

2) Students on joint degrees, interdisciplinary and/or intercollegiate modules must ensure that the department/s assessing the work are aware of their extenuating circumstances by submitting evidence to all departments concerned. Where photocopies are submitted, departments may request to see the originals submitted to the other department.

3) The application and evidence will be reviewed by each department in relation to the module it teaches and the department will write to the student to request further information or other documentary evidence if required.

4) Students are required to respond to requests for further information or documentary evidence within seven days. If a response is not received the application for extenuating circumstances to be considered will be rejected.

5) There are currently no acceptable reasons within regulations for students with ongoing caring responsibilities (as distinct from unexpected caring responsibilities caused by a sudden death or illness or worsening of ongoing medical condition to child, partner or close relative) to submit extenuating circumstances pertaining to their duties as a carer. This is according to table 4.1 Categories of Acceptable and Unacceptable Extenuating Circumstances and Evidence.

6) There is a problem with RASA's - The waiting period for an initial RASA means that students with disabilities, mental health issues and long term health conditions have no adjustments in place which deeply impact on the students' ability to learn, especially with little support and knowledge or awareness from teaching staff.

Once a RASA has been completed, staff are often unaware of the student's individual needs, and what needs to be done in order to support the student in their learning. If the RASA is not detailed enough in regards to certain adjustments for the students, the staff are unlikely to partake, causing the student to fall behind in their studies.

This Union Believes:

1) That the current system for extenuating and mitigating circumstances does not reflect the values of the college and should therefore be changed to comply with a student's right to learn. We move to stop the ableist culture of shaming students for submitting extenuating circumstances.

2) There also seems to be an ongoing issue with ableism at Goldsmiths, whereby many members of staff DO NOT abide by the RASA once it has been finalized. It is NOT up to the student to remind staff members about what is stipulated in their RASA's. Furthermore, students with disabilities / mental health issues / long term health conditions should not have to discuss the nature of their disability and how it impacts on their ability to learn and / or attend their classes / seminars, etc.

It is because of these barriers that then causes unnecessary anxiety, depression and other health problems, often leading students to take time out of their studies or unfortunately drop out of university altogether.

This union Resolves:

1) To campaign for the the following changes to be made:

2) In certain circumstances, extending the deadline to 30 days (e.g. death certificate as this may not be possible for a student to obtain within the current 7 day time limit). A student who is already unwell or suffering from trauma, mental health crisis or other disability should not have to undergo the added stress of trying to get evidence together when the college constantly reiterates that health should come before studies.

3) Given that current waiting lists for therapy for young people in London is 6 months minimum, we believe the college should extend evidence to include letters from internal college counsellors.

4) The college should accept evidence given for free by a GP and not expect students to pay for a sick note. Students should be able to claim back from the college if they are charged by their NHS GP for sick notes if they are required by the college; for example as evidence as part of an EC form.

5) Extenuating circumstances should include ongoing caring responsibilities e.g. looking after disabled parent. If this cannot be accommodated, the college should offer further support, for example relaxing deadlines for these students as their responsibilities undoubtedly affect their ability to study.

6) Students studying for joint honours should only have to submit extenuating circumstances form once and all departments should have standardised system for what can be considered legitimate evidence.

7) If the student can show that they have been to their GP and have been unable to secure a sick note, them having accessed the wellbeing centre or other college-provided resources should also contribute to evidence for extenuating circumstances.

8) If the student has an undiagnosed condition and at the time of their illness is marked down, the college should offer remarks in retrospective of their diagnosis within the same academic year - if a medical professional states that their condition is long term.

9) The college should provide an advocacy service dedicated to extenuating and mitigating circumstances to aid students in preparing their forms and knowing what to present as evidence.

10) That the college provide an online service for tracking the progress of a EC form. Where this cannot be implemented, there must be greater communication between the chair of the board of examiners and the student; including, but not limited to an automated email at each stage of an EC forms progression.

11) The college should allow appeals raised when extenuating circumstances are rejected.

12) To mandate the president of the SU work with the disability officer to act on these demands and write a progress report to be published at the end of the spring term of the academic year 2017/18.

13) A RASA should take no more than one month to complete once the student has taken the necessary steps to obtain one.

14) Once a RASA has been completed the student should be asked whether they want to share the nature of their disability with RELEVANT teaching staff.

- If the student does not wish staff members to know the nature of their disability, a digital version of the RASA should still be sent out to relevant staff, but ONLY stating the reasonable adjustments. RASA's should be respectful of the students' confidentiality.

15) RASA's should also be adjusted accordingly on the VLE. For example, if a student has extra time with hand in assignments, then the VLE should also reflect this and the deadline should be adjusted.

16) The RASA should be sent out to the department(s) and adjustments should be relevant to the teaching/assessment criteria per department. For example, for a computing student, their RASA could include that the lecturer uses screen capture in class and in turn the lecturer has to follow through with this, whether the student is present or not. For a more literature heavy course, slideshows, handouts and other documentation is given to the student prior to classes and given in an accessible format unique to the student's RASA.

17) ALL staff members have a legal requirement to make teaching spaces accessible to disabled students. If staff members continually refuse to acknowledge the RASA, appropriate measures should be taken up with by the head of department.

SOURCES

<http://www.gold.ac.uk/governance/assessmentregulations/goldsmithscollegeassessmentguidanceandprocedures/4extenuatingcircumstances/#AUECE>

http://www.gold.ac.uk/media/documents-by-section/about-us/governance/4.4-ECs-Process_Flow_Chart.pdf

http://www.gold.ac.uk/media/documents-by-section/about-us/governance/4.1-Acceptable&Unacceptable_EC&Evidence.pdf