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: Information and Guidance on Deadline Extensions, Deferral and Leave of Absence

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 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.

1.3 Students are expected to take deferred assessments at the next available opportunity as per the instructions from their Faculty.

1.4 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]

1.5 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.

1.6 Periods of suspension, debt hold, or debt exclusion will not be accepted as valid reasons for seeking deferral.

2 Definitions

2.1 **Deferral of assessment** occurs when a Student has permission from the University to take an assessment at a later date than scheduled, without it having an effect on their re-sit opportunities. This will be when the assessment is next normally offered, or, in the case of coursework or assignments, as determined by the relevant Panel (see paragraph 3 below).

2.2 **Deferrals are time-limited.** If a Student does not take the deferred assessment when it is next offered or when required by the relevant Panel, the deferral will be withdrawn and the Student will be failed in the deferred assessment(s) with a mark of 0. Notwithstanding the above, a deferral Panel may exceptionally determine otherwise or extend the term of the deferral following a further application from the Student.

2.3 **Extenuating circumstances** are genuine circumstances beyond a Student's control or ability to foresee, and which seriously impair their assessed work.

2.4 The above definition excludes cases where a whole examination may be affected by exceptional circumstances, such as serious disruption in an examination room. Such exceptional events are considered by the Assessment Boards concerned.

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.
- Circumstances arising from paid employment.
- Circumstances arising from voluntary activities that the student has chosen to engage with.
- Circumstances which arise from negligence or carelessness, for example failure by the Student to get up on time, failure to attend at the right time or location for an examination.
- Circumstances which could have been avoided by good planning, for example DMUglobal trips, holiday or travel arrangements, including allowance for delays and cancellations.
- Loss, damage or failure of personal IT hardware or personal IT files.

2.7 The lists above are examples of acceptable and unacceptable circumstances in relation to requests for deferral, but they do **not** represent an exhaustive definition of such circumstances.

3 Rights and responsibilities

3.1 Rights and responsibilities of Students

3.1.1 Any Student has the right to draw the attention of the University to personal extenuating circumstances which seriously affected their assessed work, and to request deferral of the assessment. The Student must, however, do so in accordance with the Regulations and with the University procedures outlined below.

3.1.2 It is the Student's responsibility to ensure that requests for deferral on grounds of extenuating circumstances are made on the form devised for the purpose, available from Academic Quality and Systems Department and the University website. The form must clearly list each assessment and the submission deadline for which deferral is being requested and be personally signed by the Student before submission.

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 examination will not normally be accepted as appropriate third-party evidence.

3.1.5 All third-party evidence must be provided with a signature and valid contact details. Any attempt to provide fraudulent evidence will result in disciplinary procedures.

3.1.6 In the case that the Student cites third party events having affected their ability to perform academically, evidence will be required to state how that event has affected a Student's ability to perform. e.g. how an illness or death of a family member has impacted on a Student's wellbeing, not just evidence of the illness or death.

3.1.7 If it is not possible to include the relevant third-party evidence at the time

the form is handed in, the form should still be submitted before the stated deadline with a note to say that supporting evidence will follow. In any event, the evidence must be submitted before ratified results are published.

3.1.8 Submission of a deferral request form must be in line with the published deadline, this can be found on the University website.

3.1.9 Note that deferral requests received after published Faculty deadlines will not be considered.

3.1.10 Note that Students who submit false or fraudulent documentation will be subject to the University's disciplinary procedures. The University reserves the right to contact third parties for the purposes of verifying supporting documentary evidence, however it is not the University's responsibility to contact third parties to seek the initial evidence supporting the deferral request.

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 It is the Student's responsibility to ensure that the form is submitted to the appropriate office as follows:

3.1.16 Forms should be submitted as close in time as possible to the circumstances which they describe, please see the website for deadline guidance. Unless there are wholly exceptional and valid reasons (such as physical incapacity due to a serious accident), supported by third party evidence, for the request not having been submitted by the deadline.

3.1.17 Deferrals will not be accepted retrospectively i.e., after publication of ratified results or if the request is submitted beyond the published deadlines.

3.1.18 Deferrals will not be accepted for work which has been submitted and for which the Student has received unratified marks and feedback.

<u>Students on undergraduate programmes:</u>

- Requests for deferral of formal examinations must be submitted to the Academic Affairs Team.
- Requests for deferral of coursework and faculty-based tests (such as phase tests) must be submitted to the Academic Affairs Team.

<u>Students on taught postgraduate programmes:</u>

- Requests for deferral of formal examinations and assessments must be submitted to the Academic Affairs Team.
- Requests for deferral of coursework must be submitted to the Academic Affairs Team.

3.2 Rights and responsibilities of University Staff

3.2.1 The Academic Affairs Team 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.

3.2.2 The Academic Affairs Team is responsible for ensuring that all such cases are referred to the appropriate Faculty Panel.

3.2.3 Panels considering requests for deferral have the right to reject late submissions and circumstances which do not relate in time to the

assessment concerned.

3.2.4 The Academic Affairs Team is responsible for ensuring that the Student is notified in writing, normally via email to the Students University email address, of the outcome of their application for deferral of coursework, assessments and faculty- based tests, e.g. phase tests.

3.2.5 Panels considering requests for deferrals in formal examinations have the right to approve the deferral of all examinations (not merely those requested) if the evidence submitted crosses the whole exam period.

4. Procedure for consideration of requests

4.1 Constitution of Panels

4.1.1 Each Faculty has established its own Panel to consider requests from Students on all programmes for deferral of all assessments (exams, coursework or faculty-based assessments such as phase tests).

4.1.2 The Faculty Panels are chaired by the Link Tutors (or nominee).

4.1.3 All evidence is considered on the Balance of Probability.

4.2 Panel Procedure

4.2.1 All Panels convene regularly throughout the academic session. Deadline dates by which requests and accompanying evidence must have been received by Academic Affairs Team and faculty offices are published annually.

4.2.2 Requests received after the deadlines will be dismissed. Requests received after results have been published for the assessments for which deferral is sought will not be considered.

4.2.3 For any examinations (undergraduate and postgraduate) that fall outside the main examination periods, the deadline will be in line with the Assessment and Feedback Policy. Where there is no timely Panel meeting, straightforward requests will be dealt with by the Panel's nominated representative, except that requests may only be rejected on the authority of the Panel Chair (or nominee) in consultation with another Panel member.

4.2.4 Each Panel shall consider the evidence provided in support of the application for deferral of assessment. If the Panel accepts that the evidence clearly demonstrates that, at a time closely relating to the assessment, the Student's performance was seriously impaired by adverse

personal circumstances, the Panel shall direct deferral to the next normal scheduled date of the assessment.

4.2.5 If the Student has already completed the assessment(s) for which deferral is being requested, and the Panel accedes to the request, the Student's examination script or other work submitted for assessment will not be marked. If it has already been marked, the mark or grade or other outcome shall be declared void and shall not be entered on the Student's record either at this time or at any future time. Once a deferral request has been accepted by the Panel a Student may not retract said request at a later date.

4.2.6 The decision of the Panel shall be final, except that a Student has the right of appeal on the following grounds only:

- That there is new and relevant evidence which the Student was demonstrably and for the most exceptional reason unable to provide in the first instance.
- That the Panel did not comply with its own procedures as set out above.

4.2.7 Any Student wishing to appeal must do so in writing, stating clearly the specific grounds on which the appeal is based, to the Academic Affairs Team via email to aqs@dmuk.edu.kz within 10 University working days of the Panel decision.

4.2.8 On receipt of such an appeal the Academic Affairs Officer will convene the Academic Board Panel who will consider the case. The Student is not required to be in attendance.

4.2.9 This decision shall be final and not subject to review by any other University Body.

4.2.10 The decision shall be immediately reported to the appropriate Assessment Board and notified to the Student in writing.

5. Circumstances affecting deadlines for coursework

5.1 In respect of requests for extensions of coursework deadlines, please refer to the Academic Regulations.

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 Academic Quality and Systems Department 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 the relevant Assessment Board rather than by the Academic Board Panel. In such cases, the evidence provided could point to the need for consideration of Fitness to Practise issues and would therefore be forwarded to the Fitness to Practise team.