**Supporting Evidence Guidance for Postgraduate Researchers**

# **What evidence can I provide in support of my application?**

Any evidence you wish to have considered should normally be included with your interruption or extension to thesis submission deadline application form, or appeal form.

It is recommended that you make every effort to include the evidence when you first submit your application or appeal as this will speed up the decision-making process. If, however, it is not available you must still submit the application or appeal within the timeframe stipulated in the regulations for the procedure you are applying, and clearly note on the form, or in your email, that your evidence will follow.

If your case is highly sensitive and you are concerned about sharing personal information, we advise that you speak to your Postgraduate Tutor and/or the [University Wellbeing](https://students.hud.ac.uk/help/wellbeing/) and [Disability Service](https://students.hud.ac.uk/help/wellbeing/). They can review the evidence in confidence with you and may be able to make a supporting statement for you to include with your form, without you needing to submit the sensitive evidence.

Please consider the following points when submitting your evidence:

* Evidence should confirm the nature of the circumstances affecting you and the impact they have had (exactly how and when you have been affected).
* Evidence must correspond to the length of time being requested in an interruption or extension application, or to the timing of circumstances relating to your appeal.
* Evidence must be submitted by an independent and verifiable source.
* Medical practitioners are not obliged to issue medical certificates, particularly retrospectively and may charge you for these.
* Medical evidence must be signed and dated by a medical practitioner (GP, Healthcare Professional or Clinical Specialist) and must include the dates when your circumstances affected you and how they affected you or are likely to affect your ability to continue with your studies.
* Supporting evidence should always be sought as soon as possible after the circumstances affecting you have occurred rather than retrospectively.
* Only supporting evidence written in English can be considered; if the original evidence is in another language, it is your responsibility to obtain and submit a verified translation, together with the original evidence. Evidence not translated may result in applications not been accepted and/or delayed. If the cost of obtaining translations is prohibitive for you, you should seek advice from Student Advice Centre.
* All evidence will be treated as confidential.

Examples of types of documents that are acceptable evidence for different circumstances are detailed in [**Appendix I**](#_Appendix_I_-).

# **Medical Evidence**

Any statements you make about your health must be directly supported by medical evidence if they are to be considered by the University when considering your application or appeal.

For a list of example types of documents accepted, please see [**Appendix I**](#_Appendix_I_-).

Copies of prescriptions, details of medical appointments, photographs of injuries, copies of evidence relating to a friend or family member or supporting letters from families or friends will **not be accepted**.

# **Personal Learning Support Plan (PLSP)**

Students who disclose a disability, long-term medical condition, specific learning difficulty or serious mental health issue to the University are likely to have a Personal Learning Support Plan (PLSP) put into place. A PLSP will not usually be acceptable as sole evidence to support an application or appeal as adjustments should already have been made for you as part of the implementation of the PLSP. To ensure the context of your individual case is fully understood, however, we will consider your PLSP as part of your application or appeal if you ask us to do so.

If the circumstances relating to your PLSP have changed, you should contact the University Disability Services to discuss your support needs, and the provision of further evidence. This evidence should confirm how your change in circumstances have impacted your ability to meet your submission deadlines or engage with your progression assessment/final examination. Please note, this can only be provided if you have ongoing or regular contact with your advisor or a specialist tutor or mentor. The evidence must be requested from your Disability Advisor.

# **Explaining our 'Fit to Sit' rules**

‘Fit to Sit’ is a term used by the University that means if you attend an examination under exam conditions, such as a progression monitoring viva or a final thesis viva, you are confirming that you are well enough to do so. We are unlikely to approve any claim for extenuating circumstances which you may make at a later stage.

‘Fit to Sit’ rules apply if you wish to make an assessment appeal. If you make a claim that you were not well enough to have sat your exam, then you will need to provide independent evidence signed by medical practitioner that explicitly states you were not able to determine your fitness at the time when the exam was sat. Your independent evidence should support that you were not in a position to make decisions regarding your general state of health and whether you were fit at the time. This would need to be a detailed letter from a healthcare professional. A University Medical Evidence Form or letter from another support service at the University would not be acceptable.

# **Late claims and late appeals**

If you are experiencing any extenuating circumstances, we expect you to let us know at the time when you are going through these difficulties. If you failed to let us know at the time and then apply for an extension or a back-dated interruption, due to circumstances that happened earlier in your studies, it is unlikely we will approve your request. We will only consider your request if you provide additional supporting evidence to demonstrate why your circumstances meant you were unable engage with our procedures at the time. This is as well as providing evidence for your interruption or extension request. The same will apply if you submit an appeal outside our normal procedural timeframe.

Evidence could be in the form of a GP / healthcare provider or therapist letter.

# **Appendix I - Examples of extenuating circumstances and acceptable types of supporting evidence**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Short Term Illness, Accident or Mental Health Crisis** | * Evidence should specify the negative affect on your ability to complete your work.
* Medical evidence i.e., Doctor’s note should confirm how the illness/condition is likely to affect your ability to work and provide a clear time-frame for the ongoing impact. The period of time for which you are requesting should tally with your medical evidence.
* Hospital admission and discharge letters should confirm your time spent in hospital, and anticipated recovery period.
* Statutory Sick Notes/Fitness for work Notes must be signed and stamped by your GP practice.
* Patient Summary Notices must identify you as the patient and must confirm the impact of your illness/circumstances on your ability to submit your progression report/thesis and/or have a viva. A list of conditions, prescriptions, symptoms, and appointments will not be enough.
* Police incident reports are acceptable.
* University student wellbeing services, mental health advisers and counselling staff can only provide supporting evidence if you have been accessing their services.
* If you contract Covid-19 but have not seen a GP and are unable to provide a GP letter, we may consider a positive test result notification or evidence of a requirement to isolate. These should confirm your name and the date of the test, or isolation period.
 |
| **Worsening Long Term Conditions** | * Evidence should describe how you have been affected by the change in your condition.
* Medical Evidence or GP’s letter reporting the specific deterioration or sudden change, including the time-period it applies to will be required.
* Evidence simply confirming the long-term condition without mention of any changes is normally insufficient.
 |
| **Bereavement** | * Evidence should include a copy of the death certificate or a copy of the order of service if a death certificate is not available.
* Your application form should indicate the nature of your relationship to the deceased.
* Ordinarily, up to 3 weeks will be granted for the death of an immediate family member (such as spouse, partner, child, parent, grandparent, sibling) following the death.
* Ordinarily, up to a week will be granted for the death of a close friend or less immediate family member following the death.
* For a longer period of time or when a death certificate is not available, a medical note confirming the impact of the bereavement on your ability to study will be required.
 |
| **Pregnancy and/or new Parenthood leave** | * Evidence should include medical documentation. You should refer to the University’s [Support for Pregnant Students and New Parents Policy](https://www.hud.ac.uk/media/policydocuments/Policy-on-support-for-pregnant-students-and-new-parents.pdf)
* If you cannot submit a progression report, thesis or attend a viva examination owing to illness or complications resulting from a pregnancy, then evidence from your GP, nurse practitioner or midwife will be required. The evidence will need to confirm the impact of your circumstances on your ability to meet your deadline/attend your viva, not just confirm a pregnancy and due date.
* For cases that require in excess of the standard allowances in the Support for Pregnant and New Parents Policy the standard requirements for appropriate evidence will apply.
* Where a birth occurs at the time of a submission deadline, (or the deadline falls within two weeks following a birth) evidence in the form of a birth certificate will be accepted.
* For a period of longer than two weeks after the birth evidence from your GP, nurse practitioner or midwife will be required. The evidence will need to confirm the impact of your circumstances on your ability to meet submission deadlines.
* New parents are entitled to two weeks leave (Partner’s Leave Entitlement) which, in the absence of approved extenuating circumstances must be taken within 4 weeks of the birth/adoption. Evidence must be submitted as mitigation for any unforeseen need. Any time beyond this must be catered for through an interruption of study.
 |
| **Financial or domestic difficulties** | * Evidence must confirm the impact of the circumstances on your ability to continue studying, for example a medical letter that confirms that the circumstances have caused stress that has impacted on ability to complete work.
* If your studies have been disrupted by financial difficulties a statement from a supervisor corroborating your financial status would be acceptable; a claim that includes copies of bank statements or eviction notes will not be approved as these documents do not confirm what impact your situation has had on you.
 |
| **Travel Disruption** | * In cases where you have missed an assessment / viva due to travel/weather disruption you must provide independent evidence of the disruption.
* Evidence must reflect the nature of the disruption unless the University has closed due to these unforeseen circumstances.
 |
| **Participation in a short-term professional placement/internship that directly correlates with the student’s research (for full-time candidates only)** | * Evidence could be a supporting statement from your supervisor as to the relevance of the opportunity to your research and a copy of the placement/internship offer with applicable dates specified.
 |
| **An exceptional and unexpected change in work commitments (for part-time candidates only)** | * Evidence could be a supporting email or letter from your employer confirming the change to commitments and anticipated length of time they will apply for.
* Any email from your employer should be from an organisational email address (i.e., firstname.surname@hud.ac.uk).
 |
| **Caring responsibilities/ illness of a family member** | * Evidence must confirm the impact of the circumstances on you and your ability to continue with your studies, not confirmation of the illness of your family member.
* A medical letter relating to the family member will not be considered acceptable evidence.
 |
| **Childcare Issues** | * Evidence must confirm that if you miss a submission deadline or viva due to issues with childcare, these were sudden, unexpected, and unforeseen.
 |
| **Material Irregularity** | * If you are submitting an appeal on the grounds of material irregularity, evidence would need to confirm that poor/wrong advice was given (such as a copy of an email) and the impact that this would have had. For example, if you are claiming that you missed a submission deadline due to an irregularity or misinformation from the School’s PGR Admin Team.
 |
| **Bias** | * If you are submitting an appeal on the grounds of bias, the onus is on you to provide evidence that bias, or a reasonable perception of bias has influenced your outcome. The evidence must be in the form of (for example):
* Correspondence with University staff (for example, email trails or meeting records) to support the claim of bias in the procedure marked against the published regulations.
* A statement with a detailed explanation and evidence where appropriate to support why there was bias in the procedure.
 |