

Circumstances Affecting Study

(e.g. illness and other extenuating circumstances)

From time to time things happen in a student's personal life that interfere with their ability to engage with their course. These might be short-term illnesses, more serious medical problems, financial problems, an illness or death of a family member or close friend, or care responsibilities. There are a number of ways in which these things might affect your ability to study, such as finding it hard to meet deadlines, making it hard to perform well in examinations or making it hard for you to attend lectures and seminars.

Seek Help Early

There are a number of mechanisms in place through which the University can take account of these circumstances – but only if you tell someone! The earlier the University knows about a problem or something that might have an impact on your ability to study, the easier it will be to work out how to help you and the more options the University will have available to do so.

Who To Talk To

There are a number of sources of advice and help at UEA.

For short term circumstances and minor illness the best place to start is likely to be your Academic Adviser (supervisor for postgraduate research students) or the Faculty Teaching Office / Postgraduate Research Office.

They can make a note of reasons for absence from lectures and seminars etc. and arrange extensions if necessary.

If your problems are more serious or will affect you for longer, it is a good idea to talk to your Academic Adviser or Supervisor, the Senior Adviser or Postgraduate Research Director in your School, the Union Advice Centre or the Dean of Students Office.

All these people can point you in the direction of practical help for your problem as well as suggest ways in which the impact on your studies can be taken into account.

This might mean making a note of the situation so the Board of Examiners is aware what happened when making judgements about your marks (the University cannot change marks, but it can take account of reasons why you did not do as well), arranging an extension, or giving you time away from study to sort out the problem.

Whilst a conversation with your Adviser or Supervisor, the Advice Centre or the Dean of Students is a good place to start, the University will need something in writing, usually with supporting evidence, if they need to take account of your situation formally. If you feel uncomfortable about your problem please still talk to someone because they can discuss ways in which you can tell the University what is wrong without many people knowing your problems.

If you are registered on a course that leads to professional registration, you may find that you have an obligation to inform the School under the relevant professional code of conduct, so please do not hesitate to ask for advice on how to disclose your problems.

Use the Circumstances Affecting Study Form

A good way of letting your School know about problems is to use the Circumstances Affecting Study form. This can be obtained from your Faculty Teaching Office or Faculty Postgraduate Research Office or found on the web at <https://intranet.uea.ac.uk/ltqo/forms> and collects together all the information your School needs. The key information the University needs is:

- What happened?
- When did it happen and for how long?
- How did it affect your ability to study?
- Are you able to study now or is the problem ongoing?

It often is not good enough to say that you had flu for a week. Your School needs to know that you had flu from 1 – 9 November, with a severe headache that meant you could not get out of bed and therefore missed lectures and seminars, and could not do any work towards your coursework assignments. Similarly, if a member of your family is ill or dies, the University will need to know how close you were to that person,

how the situation affected you (and specifically your attendance and studies) and over what time period, and whether you had to go home to care for a relative or attend a funeral.

The University has rules about the kinds of supporting evidence that it will accept. Your Faculty Teaching Office or Postgraduate Research Office, the Union Advice Centre or the Dean of Students Office will be able to tell you what you need to provide. In general, for short periods of illness you will be able to self-certificate. If you are ill for longer or if you are too ill to complete coursework or attend an examination, you will need to provide a medical certificate from a GMC registered doctor (e.g. your GP or the University Health Service). If the problem does not relate to ill health the above people can advise you about what sorts of evidence the University will accept.

Please talk to someone **early** about any problems you are having. There are plenty of people who will listen without making judgements. If you wait until you have your results at the end of the year it may be too late to help you, there may be fewer options or you may have to wait longer for the University to be able to put in place a remedy.
