

# **Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists**

## **Examination Extenuating Circumstances Policy**

**RCOG Examinations Department**  
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## 1. Definitions

**Extenuating circumstances** are circumstances that are unavoidable, unexpected and beyond the control of the candidate that may have a direct, substantial and negative impact on a candidate's ability to undertake or complete the examination. Normally, the effect of the circumstance will impact the candidate within three weeks prior to the examination event, but it may also include an impact on the candidate's performance during the examination. Extenuating circumstances are usually health-related or serious personal or family situations that are affecting a candidate personally, such as a serious illness or the death of a close relative.

**Candidates** refers to an examination candidate whose examination application has been accepted by RCOG and whose examination fee has been paid to RCOG.

**Working days** refers to Monday to Friday excepting UK bank holidays and RCOG closure over Christmas.

## 2. Principles and Criteria

The basic principle underpinning the consideration of extenuating circumstances is 'beyond the control of candidates'. Candidates are responsible for either attending examinations at the appropriate time and venue, or submitting information on extenuating circumstances in the proper format by specified deadlines set by RCOG. Reasons such as minor illness, a family event, travel plans, employment responsibility, or transportation difficulty will not normally be accepted.

### Some examples of circumstances

Examples that may be accepted	Examples that are unlikely to be accepted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acute illness or injury on the day of or during the examination</li> <li>• The death or serious illness of a close family member or dependant</li> <li>• Suddenly worsening of a long term health condition</li> <li>• Extended illness or injury that lasts for more than five days that is serious enough to stop you from studying, writing, or revising</li> <li>• Serious personal injury</li> <li>• Being the victim of a serious crime</li> <li>• Unavoidable and/or unforeseen transport difficulties (e.g. through natural disaster)</li> <li>• Incorrect information provided by RCOG about date/time/location of exams</li> <li>• Court attendance</li> <li>• Jury service where deferral has been refused by the court</li> <li>• Unforeseen representation of County or Country at prestigious/significant event</li> <li>• Refusal of a VISA from UK Visas &amp; Immigration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any reasons submitted without supporting evidence</li> <li>• Mistaking the date/time/location of the examination</li> <li>• Routine employment commitments</li> <li>• Transport difficulties, foreseeable or planned travel disruption</li> <li>• Oversleeping or alarm failure on the morning of the examination</li> <li>• Long term adverse circumstances</li> <li>• Minor ailment, e.g. coughs and colds, short lived viruses</li> <li>• 'Retrospective' medical evidence</li> <li>• Expected due date (candidates who are pregnant can seek special arrangements by submitting an application to Examination staff)</li> <li>• Examination stress</li> <li>• Childcare difficulties</li> <li>• Holidays</li> <li>• Religious holidays (there are separate arrangements for religious holidays, please check with Examination Department for further details)</li> <li>• Family events</li> <li>• VISA not applied for in sufficient time</li> </ul>

### **3. Extenuating Circumstances Procedures**

#### **3.1 Policy scope**

Extenuating circumstances are circumstances that are unavoidable, unexpected and beyond a candidate's control. It may have a direct, substantial and negative impact on a candidate's ability to undertake or complete the examination.

Candidates who wish to appeal an examination result outcome should refer to the RCOG Examinations Appeal policy.

#### **3.2 Submitting a request for an exceptional circumstance to be considered**

It is the responsibility of candidates to submit extenuating circumstances requests using the appropriate forms. These shall be submitted to [ExamConfidentialEnquiries@RCOG.ORG.UK](mailto:ExamConfidentialEnquiries@RCOG.ORG.UK) as soon as possible, and no later than five working days after the examination takes place.

All submissions must be formed of (i) extenuating circumstances application form (appendix A) and (ii) appropriate documentary evidence, such as medical certificates, death certificates, or police reports. RCOG Examination Department shall issue receipts for extenuating circumstances claims and evidence to the candidates. The use of receipts precludes (or substantiates) claims from candidates that RCOG Examination Department has lost their submissions, but not for a guarantee of extenuating circumstances approval.

The RCOG Extenuating Circumstances Panel will consider the evidence properly and record a decision. However, the extenuating circumstance decision may be affected due to improper or uncompleted submission. Late submission of claims, received more than five working days after the examination date will not be considered unless there are highly exceptional circumstances.

#### **3.3 Supporting Evidence**

Evidence submitted by candidates should be relevant and significant. For example, a doctor's note confirming that the candidate was ill at the time of the assessment. Evidence will often come from an expert or person in authority and will be provided in the form of an official document (e.g. a police report or doctor's note). Evidence normally takes the form of written confirmation from an objective, independent, third party. Evidence should relate to facts, not personal opinions.

A piece of evidence should include some, if not all, of the following:

- Date that the document was written
- Signature or evidence that it comes from the person making the statement (e.g. from an official email address)
- Evidence that it is independent and verifiable (e.g. the name and contact details of their company or organisation)

- Evidence that the person has the experience or expertise to make the statement (e.g. their job title or qualifications)

Some examples of supporting evidence:

<b>Circumstance</b>	<b>Evidence may be required</b>
Illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirmation of the illness and the dates concerned, such as an original medical certificate signed by a medical practitioner</li> </ul>
Illness of another person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A statement of the relationship between the person and the candidate; and</li> <li>• Confirmation of the illness, and the dates concerned, such as an original medical certificate signed by a medical practitioner</li> </ul>
Bereavement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A statement of the relationship between the person and the candidate; and</li> <li>• Death certificate or funeral statement</li> </ul>
Victim of Crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police report including a crime reference number</li> </ul>
Fire accident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A letter or report from a fire officer</li> </ul>
Court Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solicitor's letter including the dates of the legal proceedings and the requirement for you to attend</li> </ul>
Jury Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A letter from the court or tribunal including the dates of the legal proceedings, and confirming that the candidate could not be excused from jury service</li> </ul>
Unforeseen representation of your county or country at a significant/ prestigious event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A letter of confirmation from the relevant organising body; and</li> <li>• A supporting statement from an professional explaining why the event should be considered as significant/prestigious</li> </ul>
Major transport difficulty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corroboration from police or other public authority; and/or</li> <li>• Insurance reference number (if you were involved in a road traffic incident)</li> </ul>

### **3.4 Fitness to sit and absence from examinations**

If a candidate's extenuating circumstances application has been approved before the examination, the candidate should not attempt the examination. If a candidate is absent from an examination due to valid, accepted extenuating circumstances, the candidate shall not be counted as 'in attendance' for this exam.

If a candidate has submitted an extenuating circumstances application but has not received an approval before the examination, the candidate can either attend the examination or not. If the candidate attends the examination, the candidate therefore automatically declare him/herself 'fit to

sit', and the mark awarded is deemed an accurate reflection of their performances. Extenuating circumstances claims cannot be considered in these circumstances, and shall be automatically dismissed. In such circumstances, candidates are advised to refer to the RCOG Examinations Appeals policy. If the candidate is absent from the examination, his/her extenuating circumstances application will be considered by RCOG Extenuating Circumstances Panel. However, that does not mean the application will be definitely approved. If the application cannot meet the extenuating circumstances criteria documented in this policy, the candidate will be marked as 'absent from the examination', and his/her next attendance will be deemed as a resit.

If a candidate falls ill (or in other extenuating circumstances) during the time near to the examination but does not have enough time to prepare and submit extenuating circumstances application before the examination, the candidate can be absent from the exam and submit the application with five working days after the examination takes place.

If a candidate falls ill during the course of an examination, the Invigilator shall record the event in the Invigilator's Report, which shall be sent to the RCOG Extenuating Circumstances Panel. Candidates who fall ill during the course of an examination should submit claims for extenuating circumstances, with documentary medical evidence, in the same manner as any other claim if they wish to receive special consideration. Such claims shall only be accepted if the candidate was fit to sit on entering the examination venue, but for unforeseen reasons (for example, became seriously ill) during the examination.

### **3.5 Data retention**

#### **Data retention**

All materials relating to your complaint will be kept on active file for 12 months from the date of receipt of your first email to [ExamConfidentialEnquiries@RCOG.ORG.UK](mailto:ExamConfidentialEnquiries@RCOG.ORG.UK) and will then be destroyed.

## **4. Decision Making and Outcomes**

### **4.1 Extenuating Circumstances Panel**

An Extenuating Circumstance Panel will review submissions from candidates to assess whether there are acceptable grounds for extenuating circumstances. RCOG Examinations Department staff acts as a filter for the Extenuating Circumstance Panel, rejecting cases that are unsupported or not within the scope of the policy, making recommendations on clear-cut cases and identifying cases that require further consideration.

The Extenuating Circumstance Panel will normally comprise:

- Chair of the Examination and Assessment Committee (or nominee)
- Head of Examinations
- Examinations Officer

The terms of reference for Extenuating Circumstances Panel are as follows

- i. to consider extenuating circumstances submitted by candidates and supporting evidence
- ii. respond to all extenuating circumstances applications with either approval or rejection and reason for decision
- iii. to maintain a record of extenuating circumstances submitted and considered, and the recommended actions.

#### 4.2 Time of Decisions

The Extenuating Circumstances panel shall process an application as soon as a full submission has been received. Acknowledgement of receipt will be provided within two working days of receipt of the candidate submission. The process shall take no more than 20 working days. Candidates can expect a decision within 20 working days after they have received the receipt email from RCOG Examinations.

Where there is insufficient information to reach a decision on a particular request for extenuating circumstances, RCOG Examinations Department staff will inform the candidate that their request has been rejected on the grounds of insufficient information.

#### 4.3 Possible Extenuating Circumstances Outcomes

The Extenuating Circumstances Panel may agree the following extenuating circumstances outcomes:

EC Panel	Actions
Reject	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exam staff should inform the candidate that his/her application has been rejected and he/she cannot be refunded.</li> <li>• The candidate will be counted as ‘an attempt’ for the examinations they sat. (For example, if it is the first time that the candidate take the examination, the candidate will be considered as ‘retake’ for the next examination).</li> <li>• The candidate is coded as ‘absent’ and the exam mark is 0 in our record/system.</li> </ul>
Approve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exam staff should pass the case to refunding process</li> <li>• Exam staff should inform the candidate that his/her application has been approved and he/she can be refunded.</li> <li>• The candidate will not be counted as ‘an attempt’ for the examination.</li> <li>• The candidate is coded as ‘EC’ (extenuating circumstances) in our record/system.</li> </ul>

#### 4.4 Appealing Extenuating Circumstances Outcomes

If you are unhappy regarding the decision of an extenuating circumstance refund application, a review can be requested within 10 working days of the date of the RCOG response. Sufficient new evidence

to substantiate the appeal must be provided. The Examinations Department cannot review a decision that if there is no new evidence to consider.

In such circumstances, appeals will be reviewed by the Vice President for Education (or nominee) and Director of Examinations and Assessment (or nominee). Candidates will be informed of the decision within 20 working days of the day the appeal was received by RCOG.

## Appendix A: Extenuating Circumstances and Refund Application Form

Please read the Extenuating Circumstances regulations before completing this form. You will need to complete the entire form. You should submit required documents enclosed with this form to [ExamConfidentialEnquiries@RCOG.ORG.UK](mailto:ExamConfidentialEnquiries@RCOG.ORG.UK) as soon as possible after the circumstance or no later than five working days after the examination. Please keep a copy for your own records.

Part 1 Candidate details			
First Name		Surname	
RCOG Number		Candidate Exam Number	
Contact Email		Contact telephone number	
Part 2: EC details			
Exam (e.g. Part 1, 2, 3 or DRCOG)			
Date of exam	dd/mm/yyyy		
Exam fee claimed to be refunded	£		
Nature of the extenuating circumstance ( <i>Please explain what has happened and how it has affected your examination attendance</i> )			
Signature of applicant		Date	
Part 3: Supporting evidence			
Please clearly list the name and purpose of the documents you enclosed.			
Document number	Name of the document	Purpose of the document	
Document 1			
Document 2			
Document 3			