

MRCOG Extenuating Circumstances Policy

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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 who wish to withdraw their application for a particular exam after the application closing date, or who fail to appear, shall forfeit the exam fee. The RCOG will only consider refunding the exam fee for late cancellations or a no-show whereby the reason for withdrawing or non-attendance is in scope of this policy.

Candidates refers to an examination candidate whose examination application has been accepted by RCOG and whose examination fee has been paid directly to RCOG or via our testing partner, Pearson VUE.

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
• Acute illness or injury on the day of or during the examination • The death or serious illness of a close family member or dependant • Suddenly worsening of a long term health condition • Extended illness or injury that lasts for more than five days that is serious enough to stop you from studying, writing, or revising • Serious personal injury • Being the victim of a serious crime • Unavoidable and/or unforeseen transport difficulties (e.g. through natural disaster) • Incorrect information provided by RCOG, or Pearson VUE, about date/time/location of exams • Court attendance • Jury service where deferral has been refused by the court • Unforeseen representation of County or Country at prestigious/significant event • Any pregnancy-related problems or illness	• Any reasons submitted without supporting evidence • Mistaking the date/time/location of the examination • Routine employment commitments • Transport difficulties, foreseeable or planned travel disruption • Oversleeping or alarm failure on the morning of the examination • Long term adverse circumstances • Minor ailment, e.g. coughs and colds, short lived viruses • 'Retrospective' medical evidence • Examination stress • Childcare difficulties • Holidays • Religious holidays (there are separate arrangements for religious holidays, please check with Examination Department for further details) • Family events • VISA not applied for in sufficient time • Booking into test centres in a location that is no longer preferred

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 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) (ii) Appropriate documentary evidence, such as medical certificates, death certificates, or police reports.

RCOG Examination Department will confirm receipt of your email within two working days. The purpose of this is to confirm receipt of your application, but it is not a guarantee that your extenuating circumstances have been approved.

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:

Circumstance	Evidence may be required
Illness	• Confirmation of the illness and the dates concerned, such as an original medical certificate signed by a medical practitioner
Illness of another person	• A statement of the relationship between the person and the candidate; and • Confirmation of the illness, and the dates concerned, such as an original medical certificate signed by a medical practitioner
Bereavement	• A statement of the relationship between the person and the candidate; and • Death certificate or funeral statement
Victim of Crime	• Police report including a crime reference number
Fire accident	• A letter or report from a fire officer
Court Attendance	• Solicitor's letter including the dates of the legal proceedings and the requirement for you to attend
Jury Service	• 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
Unforeseen representation of your county or country at a significant/ prestigious event	• A letter of confirmation from the relevant organising body; and • A supporting statement from an professional explaining why the event should be considered as significant/prestigious
Major transport difficulty	• Corroboration from police or other public authority; and/or • Insurance reference number (if you were involved in a road • traffic incident)

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 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 themselves 'fit to sit', and the mark awarded is deemed an accurate reflection of their performance. 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, their extenuating circumstances application will be reviewed by the RCOG Examination Department. However, that does not mean the application will be definitely approved. The decision still depends on the application meeting the extenuating circumstances criteria outlined above.

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 and is unable to complete the examination, the Invigilator shall record a case report, which shall be sent to the RCOG Examinations Department following the exam. 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.

4. Decision Making and Outcomes

4.1 Review of Extenuating Circumstances

RCOG Examination Department staff will review submissions from candidates to assess whether there are acceptable grounds for extenuating circumstances, in line with the criteria documented above. In the event of more complex cases/circumstances where it may be unclear as to whether they fall in scope of this policy or require further consideration, the application will be reviewed by an Extenuating Circumstances Panel.

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 complex 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

RCOG Examinations Department staff 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	• Exam staff should inform the candidate that their application has been rejected and they cannot be refunded.
Approve	• <u>MRCOG Part 1, Part 2 & DRCOG exams</u> • If approval is provided a minimum of 72 hours prior to exam day your appointment will be cancelled and a refund from Pearson VUE will be initiated • If approval is provided within 72 hours of exam day, or after the exam, candidates are not entitled to a refund of the examination fee, but will be provided with a voucher code to book onto the next examination sitting at no additional charge. The voucher code will cover 100% value of the price of the exam • MRCOG Part 3 • The RCOG will initiate a full refund of the examination fee • Exam staff should inform the candidate that their application has been approved and they will be refunded •

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.

5. Data Retention

All materials relating to your extenuating circumstances application will be kept on active file for 12 months from the date of receipt of your first email to examconfidentialenquiries@RCOG.org.uk and will then be destroyed.

Edition date: Dec 2023

Replacing edition date: Sept 2019

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 DRCOG exam staff 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			