

Individual Extenuating Circumstances Relating to Examinations and Assessment – a guide for students:

Individual Extenuating Circumstances (IECs) describes conditions which temporarily prevent a student from taking an assessment(s) or significantly impair a student's performance in an assessment(s). This guide is intended to detail the Institute's provision and support for students who experience IECs.

In the first instance it is important to outline the principles that govern the Institute's approach to IECs:

- Support of the student – CIT is at its core a student centred institution and for this reason it seeks to provide every support possible to allow its students to achieve their true potential. This policy is intended to address circumstances which impact directly and negatively on a student's assessment performance. This policy is not intended to provide compensation for all challenging and difficult circumstances a student may experience.
- Fairness and consistency – Any provision or action in relation to IECs should have due regard for the Institute's obligation to ensure fair and consistent treatment for all its students.
- Protection of academic standards – It is essential that the integrity of the Institute's academic standards is not undermined by any action or provision in relation to IECs.

What are IECs

The document, *What are Individual Extenuating Circumstances* gives detailed guidelines to allow students to understand what are considered to be valid IECs. In general IECs are judged by their impact on the student's performance in specific assessment(s) and not the impact on the individual.

The Institute is committed to the welfare of its students and provides numerous supports to help a student to cope with any issues they may be facing. Generally the onus is on the student to address any issues that have a negative impact on academic performance and to seek out the appropriate supports. Normal-life issues (as described in the document *What are Individual Extenuating Circumstances*) should be addressed by the student and he/she should take steps to minimise the impact of these.

Ongoing or longer-term conditions or circumstances (e.g. chronic illness) are not IECs, and should normally be handled by disability support and/or special assessment arrangements. They will only give rise to valid IECs claims if they first come to light or are diagnosed, or become unexpectedly and markedly worse, at assessment time.

The ability to study effectively might also be affected by IECs, but any ongoing or long-term inability to study should lead to consideration of the need to suspend study.

If a student believes that their particular circumstances constitute IECs they should, at the earliest possible opportunity, communicate these to the appropriate individual or Board according to the procedures set out below.

Getting Help with IECs

As a general principle all claims in relation to IECs should be initiated by you the student. It is the your responsibility to ensure that you understand and engage with the Institute's IECs procedures. It is not reasonable to expect that the Institute should be pro-active in seeking out students with IECs.

The procedures for addressing IECs are divided into three phases as follows:

1. Pre-claim phase
2. Informal claim phase
3. Formal claim phase

Pre-claim phase

If you are experiencing circumstances which you believe may impact their academic or assessment performance you may reveal these to a suitable officer of the Institute i.e. lecturer, programme co-ordinator, Head of Department or student counselling/medical staff. During this pre-claim phase the goal is to direct you the student to the appropriate supports and services to allow you to address your circumstances.

It is vital that you understand that engagement during this phase does not constitute a claim for IECs. It is for advice and guidance only. The onus is on you to initiate a subsequent claim if you believe that the IECs have persisted and actually impacted on your performance.

Informal claim phase

If you believe that you have valid IECs you should in the first instance seek to address these via an informal IECs claim. This type of claim is particularly suited to continuous assessment(s). Pursuing an informal claim does not prevent or prejudice a subsequent formal claim.

An informal claim is initiated by you the student when you inform your lecturer(s), programme co-ordinator or Head of Department in writing (including via email) that you believe that you have valid IECs. You must clearly state the nature of the circumstances and must identify the assessment(s) affected and the severity of the impact.

On receipt of such a claim, sufficient details of the claim must be communicated by the recipient to the relevant lecturer(s), module co-ordinator(s), programme co-ordinator and Head of Department. Any such communications must seek to strike a reasonable balance between the need for sufficient information on the part of the Institute's officers and the student's right to confidentiality.

If your claim is deemed valid your circumstances may be addressed by:

- Student guidance and support – In addressing IECs the Institute will seek in the first instance to provide guidance and support. This should allow you to complete your assessment(s), achieve your full potential and obviate the need for further extraordinary actions. Among the provisions in this category are pastoral counselling, academic assistance, medical treatment and disability support.
- Restructuring or reconfiguration of assessment(s) – Certain types of assessment are amenable to restructuring or reconfiguration. The types of actions which may be considered include the extension of submission deadlines, the provision of reassessment opportunities and the modification of assessment requirements.

Formal claim phase

If you are experiencing circumstances which you believe may impact your academic or assessment performance you may at any stage complete an Individual Extenuating Circumstances Claim Form and submit it to your Head of Department. A formal IECs claim may only be submitted via the Head of Department.

Your formal IECs claim should be assessed and addressed by the appropriate Module Examination Board(s) and/or Progression and Awards Board. If the outcome of the assessment deems the claim valid your circumstances may be addressed by:

- Removal of penalties – If a board deems that IECs are valid they may decide to rescind any penalties that have been applied for late-submission of assessment(s).
- Deferral of assessment – If it is not possible to restructure or reconfigure the affected assessment(s), the next available option is to award a deferral. This allows the assessment(s) to be completed at a later date once the IECs have abated and you can perform to your potential. The decision to award a deferral may only be taken by the appropriate Board.

You should note that it is essential that marks and credits are awarded based on the demonstration of learning rather than on the basis of IECs. Therefore, in order to ensure that the Institute's academic standards are maintained adjustments to a student's academic record are restricted to a very limited number of situations and are only considered as a last resort when all other available actions have been considered.

Confidentiality

You should be confident in the knowledge that the officers of the Institute (i.e. lecturers, course co-ordinators, Heads of Department, counselling staff, etc) will treat your circumstances as highly confidential and will not disclose them in any way beyond what is required to deal with your claim.

However, if your circumstances are such that you feel that you are not able to reveal them as part of the process described above you may avail of the Institute's *sub-rosa* process. The *sub-rosa* process allows you to document your circumstances and these are retained, unread, in a sealed envelope. You may subsequently appeal and refer to the circumstances you submitted *sub-rosa*. Only then will you're the documentation relating to your circumstances be read by the Chair of the Examination Appeals Board.

While the *sub-rosa* process does offer extreme confidentiality it does prevent any intervention or action in relation to your circumstances until all assessments have been completed and results issued. This removes any opportunity of providing you with assistance and support to help you deal with your circumstances. Therefore, the advice to students is that you should if at all possible engage with the normal process with the assurance that your circumstances will be handled with the utmost sensitivity and confidentiality.

For your information the *sub-rosa* process is described in detail in the CIT Examination Appeals Policy document.