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an Chabháin agus Mhuineacháin
*Cavan and Monaghan
Education and Training Board*

Assessment Reference Framework

Assessment Deadlines: Compassionate Consideration In Extenuating Circumstances

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Drafted by:

ETBI National Assessment Procedures Handbook Working Group
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**Compassionate Consideration
in extenuating circumstances**

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1. Principles of Assessment in Relation to Assessment Deadlines: Compassionate Consideration in Extenuating Circumstances

Assessment is underpinned by the **principles of assessment** including the *fair* principle (equal opportunity for all learners) and *consistent* principle (consistency in approach to assessment across ETBs, programmes and modules). As such, in order to ensure the fair and consistent assessment of learners, the following procedure should be followed in relation to compassionate consideration in extenuating circumstances. The provider's Quality Assurance System overarches these principles and ensures learner achievement is assessed in a fair and consistent way in line with the national standards for the award. **Exceptional circumstances can occur which impact the ability of the learner to complete their assessment. These are known as 'extenuating circumstances' and are usually serious, unforeseen circumstances that take place just before or at the time of an assessment. Compassionate consideration can be given at the discretion of the Programme Coordinator if the situation merits same. It is up to the learner to communicate this extenuating circumstance to their Learning Practitioner as soon as possible for any accommodation to be considered and alternative arrangements put in place.**

Awarding Bodies may have their own processes and timelines in relation to applications of extenuating circumstances. If multiple assessments are due to take place around the time of the extenuating circumstance it is up to the Programme coordinator to discuss the impact on each assessment and communicate with the Awarding Bodies accordingly.

In order to ensure *fairness* and *consistency* across all assessment activities learners may apply for compassionate consideration in relation to their assessment. Such compassionate consideration could include deferring an assessment activity or providing an extension to an assessment deadline **and will only be granted in extenuating circumstances with supporting relevant evidence/documentation (see 2.2)**. In these circumstances, the learner must not be unfairly disadvantaged as a result of extenuating circumstances. Furthermore, the learner must not gain significant advantage when compared with other learners.

In order to ensure the fair and consistent assessment of learners, the following procedure should be followed in relation to compassionate consideration in extenuating circumstances. The provider's Quality Assurance System overarches these principles and ensures learner achievement is assessed in a fair and consistent way in line with the national standards for the award.

Principles of Assessments

1 Validity

Validity is a fundamental assessment principle ensuring that an assessment measures what it is designed to measure: the relevant standard of knowledge, skill or competence required for an award should be assessed.

Validity in assessment occurs when:

- Assessment is fit for purpose (i.e. a practical assessment assesses a practical skill)
- Learners can produce evidence which can be measured against the award standard
- Assessors can make accurate assessment decisions
- Assessment is accessible to all candidates who are potentially able to achieve it

2 Reliability

Reliability in assessment ensures that assessment measurement is accurate: the knowledge, skills and competence which the assessment measures should produce reliable and accurate results. Reliability in assessment ensures that results are consistent under similar conditions.

Reliability in assessment occurs when:

- The assessment is based on valid assessment techniques
- Assessment conditions are consistent
- Learner evidence is reliable
- Results are consistent over time across various assessors, contexts, conditions and learners

3 Fair

Fairness in assessment supports the validity and reliability principles and provides equal opportunity to all learners. Fairness in assessment ensures learners have access to appropriate resources/equipment in assessment; assessment design and implementation are fair to all learners; and policies and procedures exist to ensure fair assessment of learners.

4 Quality

Quality in assessment ensures that all assessment processes are quality assured.

5 Transparency

Transparency in assessment ensures that assessment policy and process provide clarity to all relevant stakeholders.

Based on QQI Principles for Assessment (QQI, 2013)

2. Definitions

For the purpose of this document Learning Practitioner refers to Learning Practitioner/adult educator, resource person, instructor or equivalent.

2.1. Compassionate Consideration

The Programme Co-ordinator can enable learners who:

- **have been prevented from undertaking a specific assessment activity** because of extenuating circumstances, to apply to defer the assessment, i.e. to be allowed to complete the assessment activity on another occasion.

or

- **felt their performance has been seriously impaired** because of extenuating circumstances, to apply to repeat the assessment, i.e. to be allowed to sit the assessment activity on at an alternative sitting. In extenuating circumstances, a learner may feel that his/her performance has been seriously impaired and may apply for compassionate consideration due to extenuating circumstances. In such cases, supporting relevant evidence/documentation must accompany the application (see 2.2). The application is then processed and either granted or declined. Where the application has been declined, the original result of the assessment will apply. Learners have the right to appeal this decision (see Section 5).

2.2. Examples of extenuating circumstances (Compassionate Consideration)

Extenuating circumstances are situations or events which unexpectedly interfere with a learner's ability to complete or sit an element of assessment. Extenuating circumstances under which **may** be conserved include, but are not limited to:

- Recent physical injury or emotional trauma
- physical disability or chronic/disabling condition such as epilepsy, glandular fever, severe effects of pregnancy or other incapacitating illness of the learner
- recent bereavement of close family member or close friend
- personal injury certified by a medical practitioner
- domestic crisis
- certified mental health issue
- serious illness of a close family member
- serious illness of child or other family member for whom the learner is primary carer
- other extenuating circumstances

Compassionate Consideration in extenuating circumstances

Examples of circumstances which are **unlikely to be considered** include, but are not limited to:

- typical symptoms associated with exam stress
- minor illnesses such as a common cold
- holidays
- IT and/or computer failure (excluding in an examination)
- English is not the first language of the learner

Any application in relation to compassionate consideration requires the learner to provide supporting relevant evidence/documentation (see 2.3) of the extenuating circumstances.

2.3. Supporting relevant evidence/documentation

Supporting relevant evidence/documentation refers to a:

- **Statement from a qualified professional practitioner.** Examples of statements from a qualified professional practitioner necessary for consideration of compassionate consideration include, but are not limited to:
 - Statement from medical practitioner (e.g. doctor, psychologist, etc)
 - Statement from An Garda Síochána/legal professional
 - Statement from Programme Co-ordinator or Centre Manager (in extenuating cases, the Programme Co-ordinator or Centre Manager may be aware of circumstances whereby the learner may be unable to obtain a statement from another qualified professional (e.g. due to financial constraints) and may complete a statement for the learner while maintaining confidentiality (Appendix 1)

- **RIP.ie or other source (if requested)**

All evidence must be on headed paper and must be legible, stamped and dated.

All evidence must relate to the specific application for extenuating circumstances being made.

3. Compassionate Consideration Roles and Responsibilities

3.1. The Programme Co-ordinator

- The Programme Co-ordinator is required to ensure all Learning Practitioners are made aware of their roles in relation to planning, conducting and concluding assessment (*Learning Practitioner Handbook*¹). In the request for compassionate consideration, the Programme Co-ordinator, or designated person, is responsible for the management of the application process.

3.2. The Learning Practitioner

- The Learning Practitioner is required to inform learners of assessment deadlines in advance (*Learning Practitioner Handbook*, notice boards, etc.). Where a learner misses an assessment deadline, the Learning Practitioner should **not** accept assessment evidence after that date and should inform the learner of the compassionate consideration process in which s/he can engage. **Retrospective application of compassionate consideration can only be considered within 5 working days of the date of assessment taking place. The teacher/tutor should remind learners at every assessment interval to inform him/her of any extenuating circumstances as soon as they possibly can.**
- In the request for compassionate consideration, the Learning Practitioner is required to inform and meet² with the Programme Co-ordinator in order to process the learner application.

3.3. The Learner

- The learner is required to keep up-to-date with relevant assessment deadlines and consequences for missing same (e.g. *Learner Handbook*¹, notice boards, etc.).
- In the event of extenuating circumstances, the learner is required to complete the application for compassionate consideration using the guidelines in this document and the appropriate application form (see Appendix 2).
- The learner is required to provide relevant supporting evidence/documentation (see 2.3) of the extenuating circumstances which they felt:

may have prevented or may prevent him/her from either:

¹ The *Tutor/teacher Handbook* is currently under development

² In the case of Outreach or Distance Learning Programmes, the Tutor/teacher may be unable to meet with the Programme Co-ordinator and as such may communicate via phone and/or email.

Compassionate Consideration in extenuating circumstances

- **completing** an assessment activity (Learner Record, Collection of Work, Project, Assignment or Skills Demonstration), or
- **missing** a practical assessment (Examination or Skills Demonstration)

or

seriously impaired or may seriously impair his/her performance) in:

- a practical assessment (Examination or Skills Demonstration).

This must be provided within a reasonable **defined** timeframe after the assessment deadline date of application (recommended timeframe: within 2 days and no more than 2 weeks³ after date of application).

4. Compassionate Consideration Procedure

Where a learner requires compassionate consideration in relation to an assessment deadline the process outlined below should be followed.

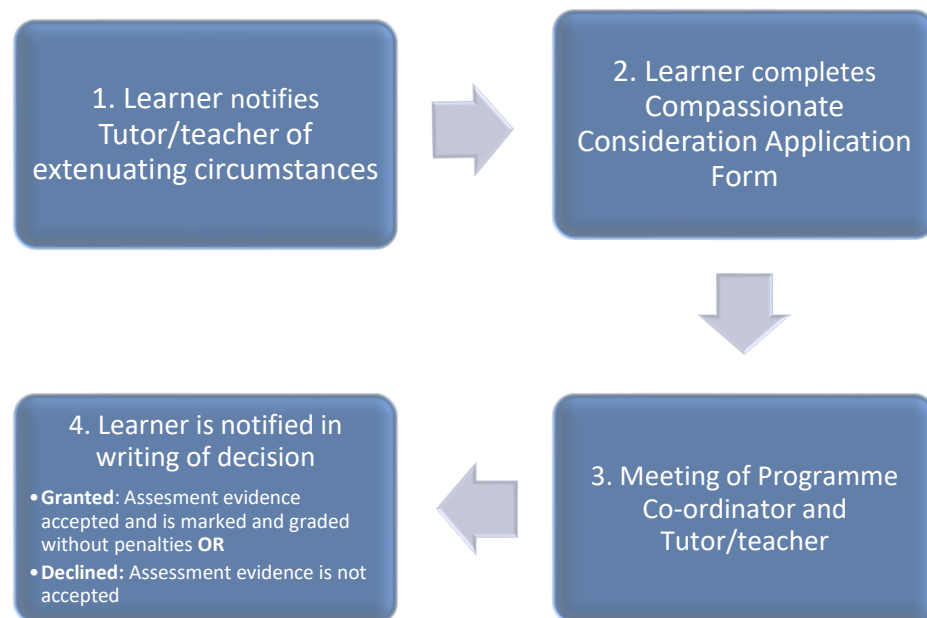


Figure 1.1 Compassionate Consideration Procedure

- 1) The learner notifies the Learning Practitioner of the extenuating circumstances which they felt:
 - a) **may have prevented or may prevent him/her** from either:
 - **completing** an assessment activity (Learner Record, Collection of Work, Project, Assignment or Skills Demonstration), or
 - **missing** a practical assessment (Examination or Skills Demonstration)

³ In exceptional cases, the Programme Co-ordinator or Centre Manager may extend this date due to the specific circumstances which may prevent the learner from obtaining the relevant evidence/documentation within the allowed timeframe.

or

- b) **seriously impaired or may seriously impair his/her performance**) in:
- a practical assessment (Examination or Skills Demonstration).

The Learning Practitioner informs the learner of Compassionate Consideration procedure.

2. The learner completes the **Compassionate Consideration Application Form** (see Appendix 2) and returns it to the Programme Co-ordinator or designated person e.g. Learning Practitioner) within a reasonable **defined** timeframe of one (1) working day and a maximum of three (3) working days⁴. This application **MUST** be accompanied with relevant supporting evidence/documentation (see 2.3) and must state the **extenuating circumstances** that occurred.
3. A meeting between the Programme Co-ordinator and the Learning Practitioner is arranged to discuss the application and decide on the outcome.

The Programme Co-ordinator and Learning Practitioner must judge each application for compassionate consideration or extenuating circumstances on its own merits.

In the event of extenuating circumstances, considerations include:

- Details of extenuating circumstances
 - Severity of circumstances
 - Application from learner
 - Relevant supporting evidence/documentation
 - Nature of the assessment activity (Assignment, Project, Learner Record, Collection of Work, Skills Demonstration and Examination)
4. The learner is informed in writing (or other appropriate format) of the outcome of the meeting, granted or declined within a **defined** timeframe (recommended timeframe: within one (1) working day and not more than three (3) working days).

a) **Granted:**

- If the decision is that the compassionate consideration application has been **granted**, the revised schedule for the assessment activity is agreed between the Learning Practitioner and the learner. Every attempt to facilitate this in the current assessment period will be made. However, due to time constraints, the nature of the assessment activity, and/or resources, this revised schedule may roll into a subsequent certification period.
- **Examination:** Where a compassionate consideration application has been granted, in the event that the assessment activity is an examination, a new examination paper, marking scheme and set of outline solutions must be devised:

⁴ In exceptional circumstances, the Programme Co-ordinator may extend this

the original examination paper will not be re-used. The assessment arranged should be treated as a 'first sit' in order to ensure the learner has not been disadvantaged.

- **Learner Evidence (Assignment, Project, Learner Record, Collection of Work and Skills Demonstration):** Where a compassionate consideration application has been granted, the learner evidence is accepted by the Programme Co-ordinator or Learning Practitioner and **should be marked and graded in accordance with the standards for the award**. The actual marks and grade awarded are determined solely on the basis of the evidence submitted in accordance with the standards for the award. **There is no mark/grade penalty under this procedure as this is considered a first attempt due to extenuating circumstances.**

b) Declined:

- If the decision is that the compassionate consideration application has been **declined**, the Programme Co-ordinator or Learning Practitioner will refuse to accept the assessment evidence from the learner (Levels 4-6). The learner the right to appeal this (see Section 5).

5. Compassionate Consideration Appeals

The learner has the right to appeal the decision in relation to compassionate consideration application decision. Appeals must be made within a defined timeframe of two (2) working days of the decision. (In exceptional circumstances, the Programme Co-ordinator may extend this). All appeals must be made in writing using the CMETB Process Appeals Procedures.

References

QQI (2013) Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers. Available at:

<https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Quality%20Assuring%20Assessment%20-%20Guidelines%20for%20Providers%2c%20Revised%202013.pdf>

6. Appendix 1: Statement from Programme Co-ordinator or Centre Manager

In exceptional cases, the Programme Co-ordinator or designated person e.g. Learning Practitioner/Centre Manager may be aware of circumstances whereby the learner may be unable to obtain a statement from another qualified professional (e.g. due to financial constraints) and may complete a statement for the learner while maintaining confidentiality.

STATEMENT FROM PROGRAMME COORDINATOR OR CENTRE MANAGER

Re Application for Compassionate Consideration

To be completed by the Programme Co-ordinator or Learning Practitioner/Centre Manager

Programme Co-ordinator /Learning Practitioner/ Centre Manager Name:	
Learner Name:	
Course/Programme:	
Module(s) / Assessment Impacted	
Date assessment started	
Date and time interruption to assessment occurred Detail remainder of assessment left to complete	

Circumstance invoking compassionate consideration	
Next Steps (Tutor populate)	
QA Response to statement provided	
Declaration:	
<p>I can confirm that there are confidential extenuating circumstances which pertain to this learner which have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ prevented him/her from undertaking a specific assessment activity or ○ seriously impaired his/her performance⁵ 	
Signed:	
Date:	

This application form must be submitted to the Programme Co-ordinator or designated person

COMPASSIONATE CONSIDERATION in extenuating circumstances	
Part B: (Office Use) This section must be completed by the Programme Co-ordinator	
Programme Co-ordinator Name:	
Receipt date of application:	
Learning Practitioner Name(s):	
Date of meeting with Learning Practitioner(s):	
Application prior to or after the assessment activity/deadline:	Prior to <input type="checkbox"/> After <input type="checkbox"/>

Criteria:	Details:
➤ <i>Details of extenuating circumstances</i>	
➤ <i>Severity of circumstances</i>	
➤ <i>Application from learner</i>	
➤ <i>Relevant supporting evidence/documentation</i>	
➤ <i>Nature of the assessment activity</i>	
Application:	Granted <input type="checkbox"/> Declined <input type="checkbox"/>
Declaration:	
I can confirm that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A meeting with the Learning Practitioner to discuss the compassionate consideration application has taken place ➤ There is sound evidence to grant or decline the application for compassionate consideration based on criteria above ➤ If granted, the granting of compassionate consideration will not give the learner in question an unfair assessment advantage over other learners undertaking the assessment ➤ I will inform the learner in writing of the decision regarding compassionate consideration 	

Signature:	
Date:	

*If declined, form for appeal should be made available to the learner

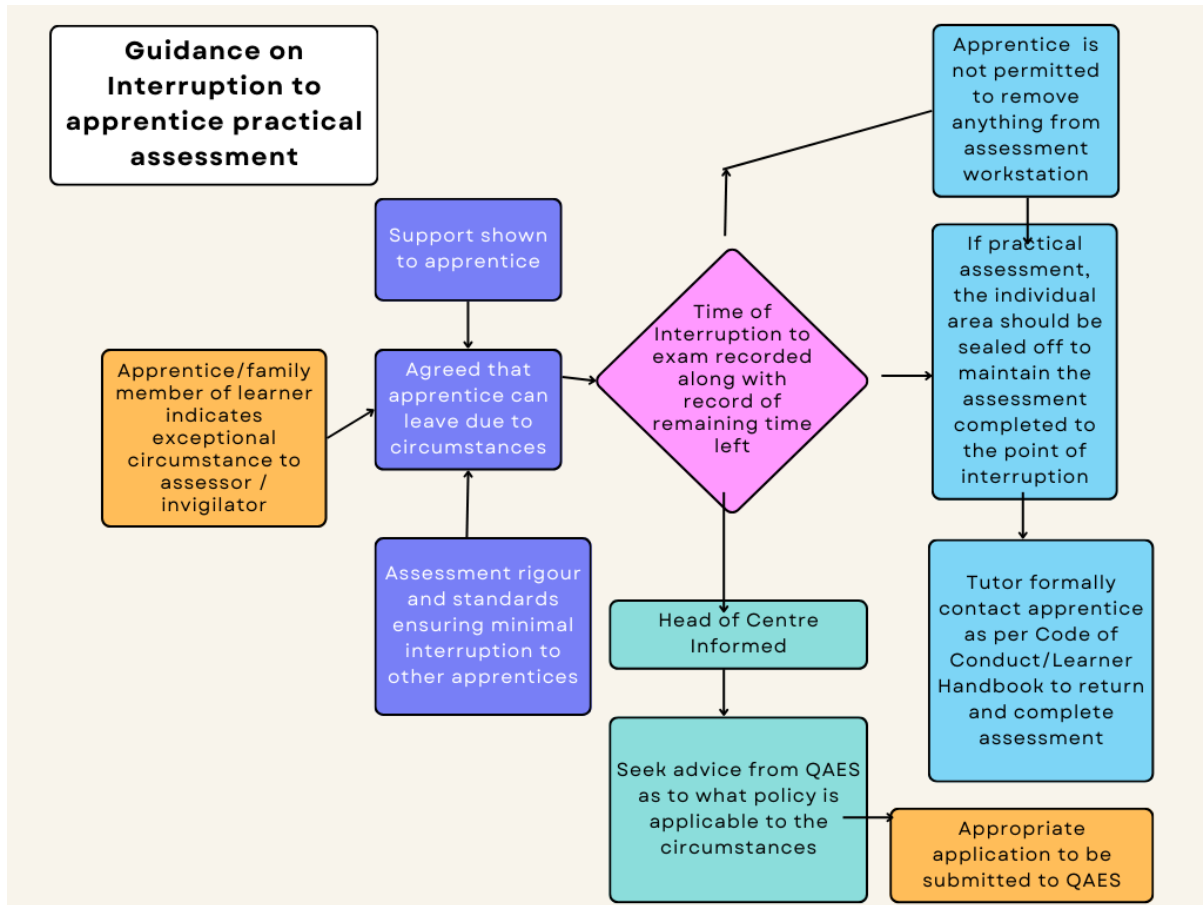
COMPASSIONATE CONSIDERATION <i>in extenuating circumstances</i>	
Part C: This section must be completed by the Programme Co-ordinator and returned to the Learner <i>This section should accompany relevant assessment material when submitted.</i>	
Learner Name:	
Date of Decision:	
Outcome:	Granted <input type="checkbox"/> Declined <input type="checkbox"/>
If granted, details of extended deadline etc.	

Appendix 3: Appeals Application Form
(Assessment Deadlines: Compassionate Consideration)

APPEALS APPLICATION FORM	
(Assessment Deadlines: Compassionate Consideration)	
Part A: This section must be completed by the Learner	
Nature of Appeal:	Compassionate Consideration
Centre Name:	
Learner Name:	
Date of Application:	
Reason for Appeal:	
Reason why decision was declined:	
Details of supporting evidence provided:	
Date of Application:	

Part B: (Office Use) This section must be completed by the relevant ETB Manager	
Name:	
Receipt date of application:	
Application:	I can confirm that a review of the application has been completed and that the Appeal is: Granted <input type="checkbox"/> Declined <input type="checkbox"/>
Reason:	
Signature:	
Date:	

Flowchart for guidance on apprentice interruption to practical assessment



Compassionate Consideration	Section 1		Addition re extenuating circumstances
Compassionate Consideration			Addition re other Awarding Bodies
Compassionate Consideration	3.2	Will tutor/teacher cover all eventualities in place of Learning Practitioner Keep nationally agreed terminology	
Compassionate Consideration		Insertion re retrospective application within 5 working days Agreed	
Compassionate Consideration	Appendix 1		Changes to table to include detail on interruption to exam Agreed as includes updating QA team
Compassionate Consideration	Flowchart Diagram		This was added in response to a request from apprenticeships